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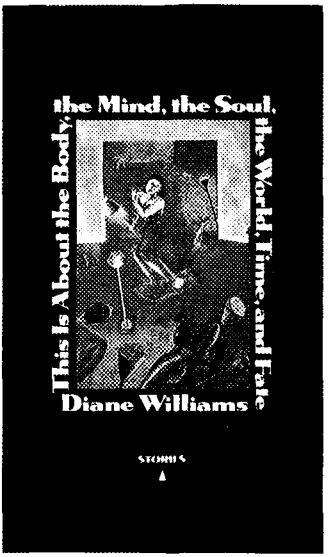

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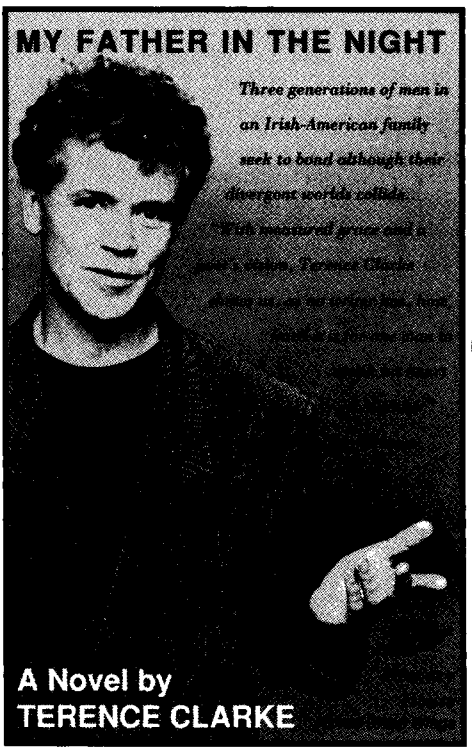

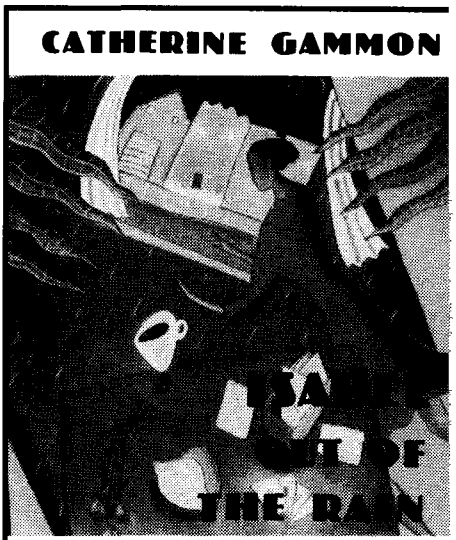

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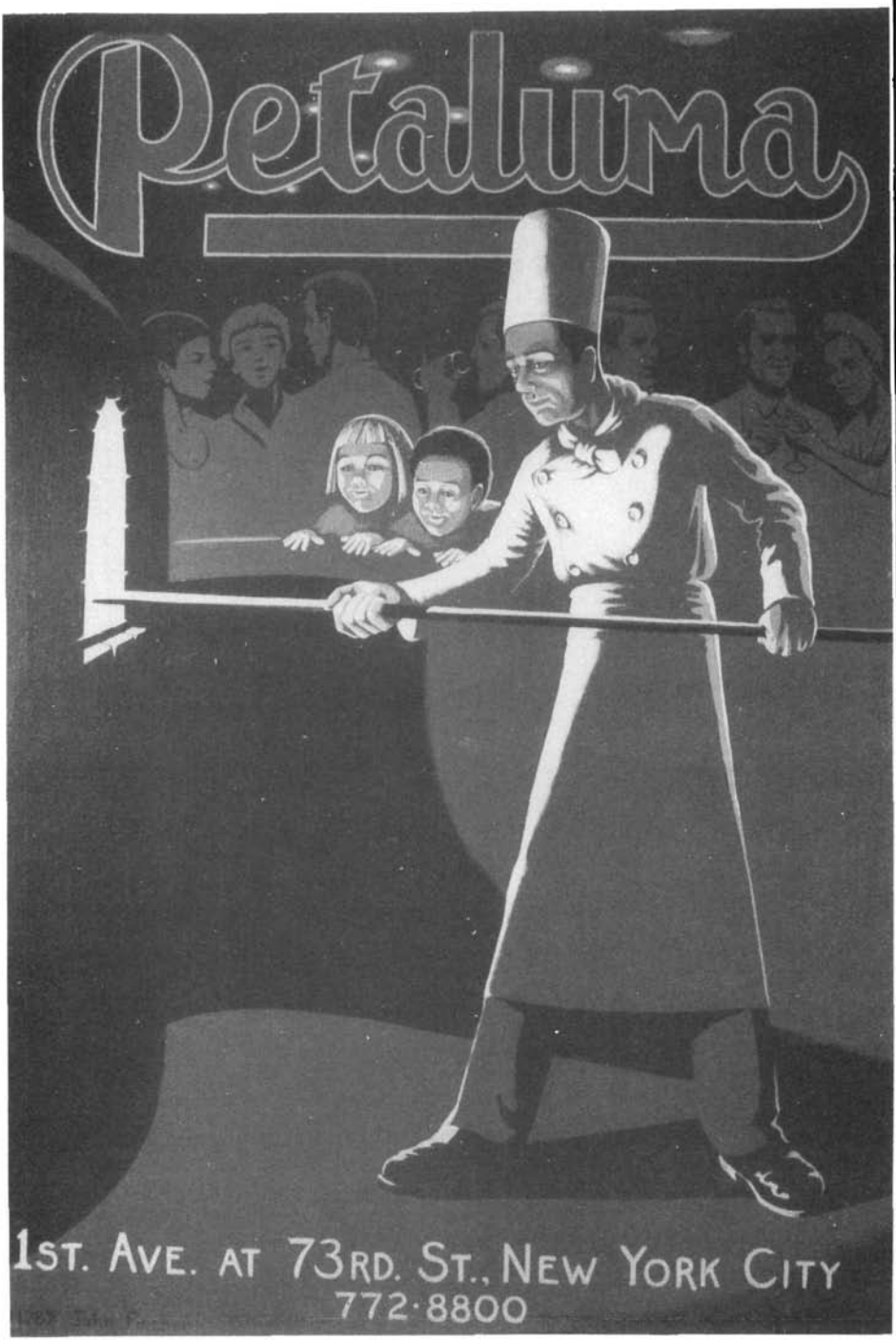

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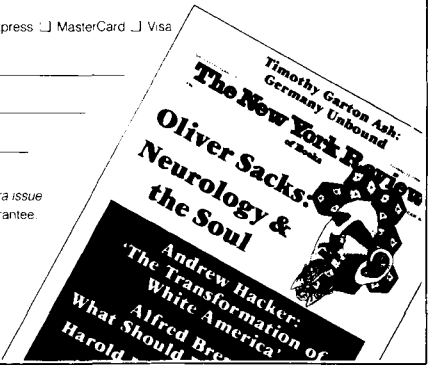

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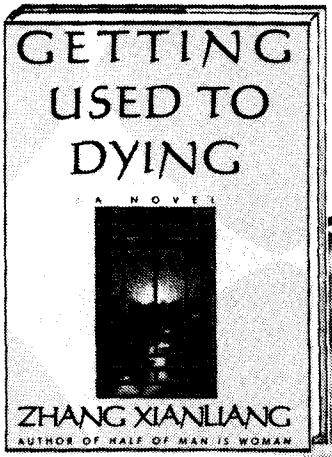

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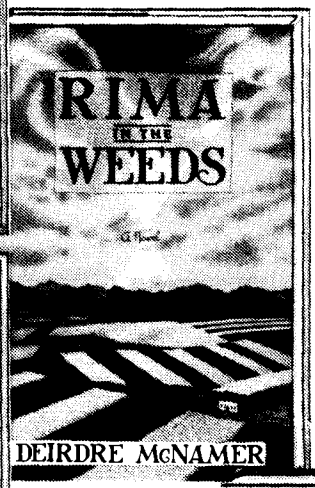

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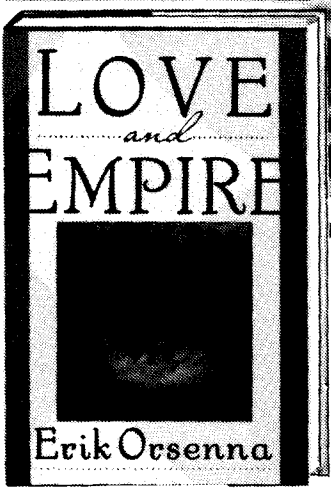

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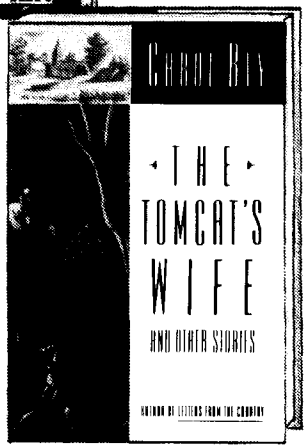

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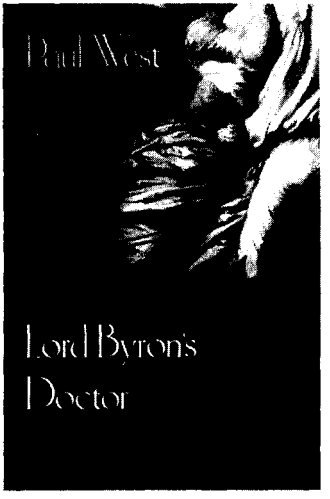

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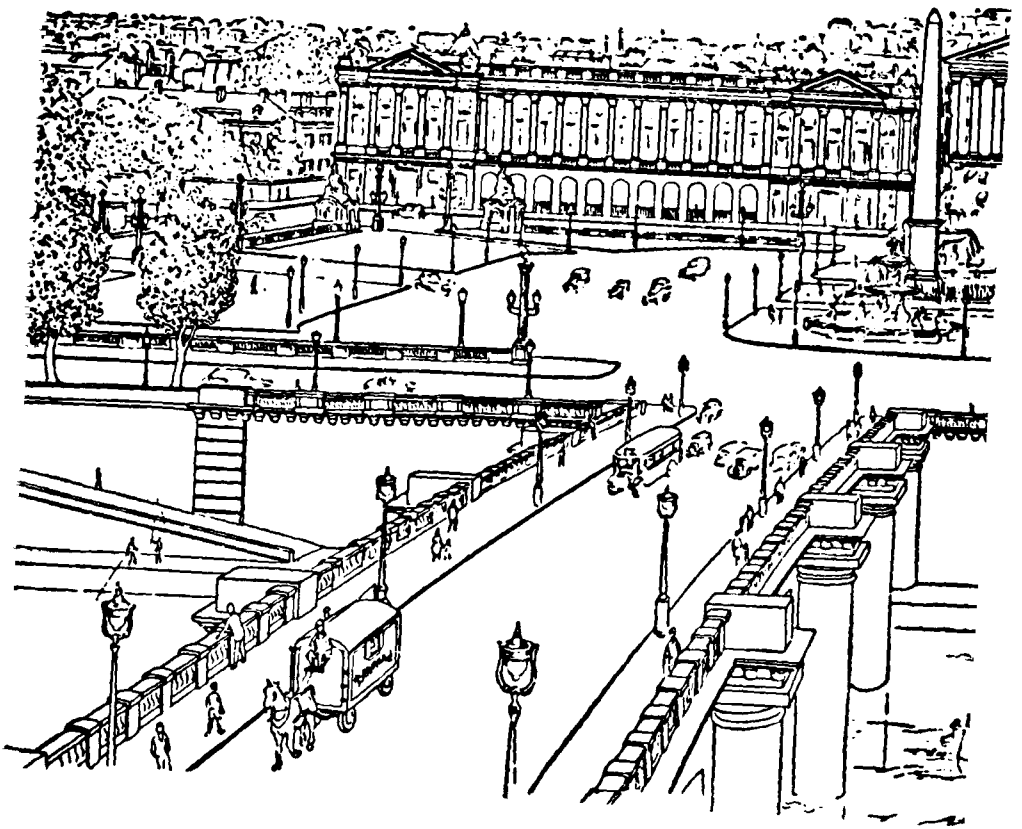

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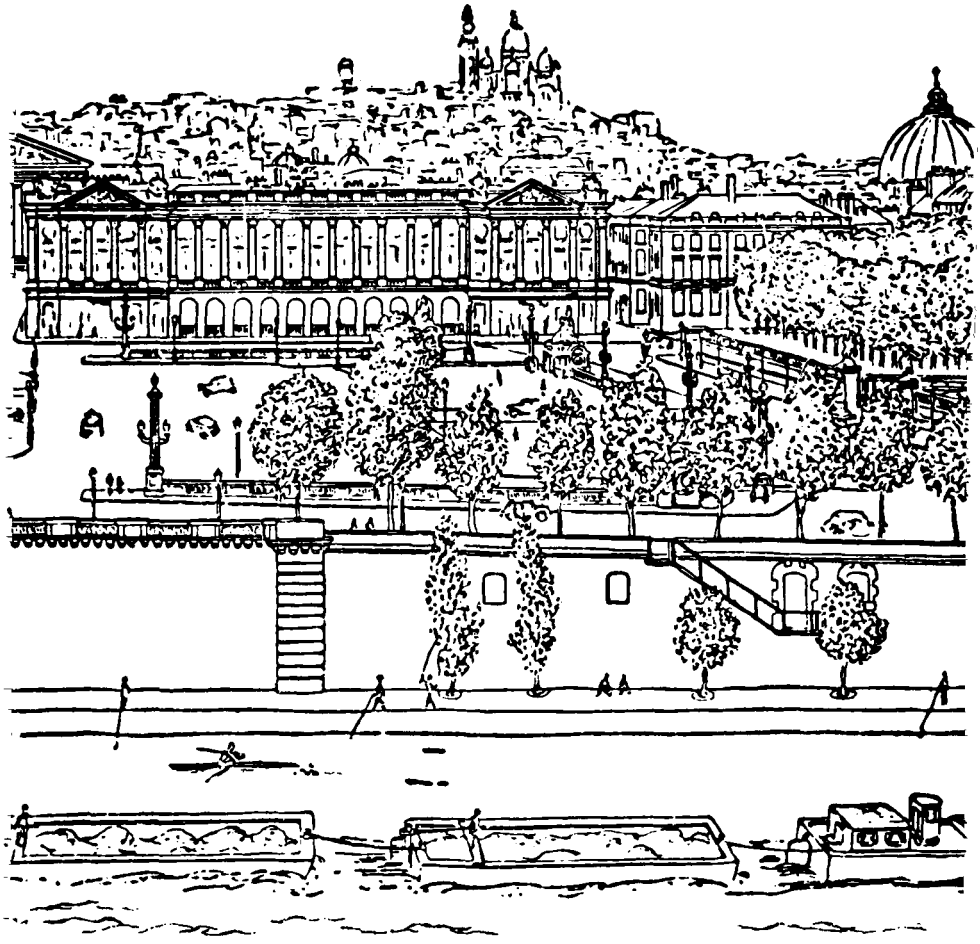

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John Ashbery

from Flow Chart

The madhouse statuary seemed to dispel the pre-life
we gave it
in sleep, to become the one bauble rescued from that
hoard, whose shapes
no one now will know. It cannot be said they existed.
Yet
surely there was life, once in those seams, life the
daughters of the iron teeth
of time gave it, and swallows flew over it. One might
say, casually,
that there was variation in it, that there was texture.
More, though,
one still couldn't say. Yet one day the sanitation
department decreed
it was coming through, a nice day in May with the
usual blossoms, though these
were only accessories, having no bearing on the tale or
its context, petal-like, in fact, like a cat's nose, but the
judge
happened by just then and told them to stop it. They
went away and someone,
a bushy-haired man, came back and said it was OK,
they could keep on doing it
if they wanted to, but not to say he said so, but that it
was OK.
I long meanwhile for the confines of any other
principality, but can't abandon
working even if I wanted to, it's like play to me
though I get no pleasure from it
except pausing at odd moments to watch the rill for a
few seconds,
and then it's back to work again, more work, lots of
it, and the pollution

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attendant on it, like Hebe to the rainbow's gauzy showers, or web, and I
can't stand on tradition nor beside it. Here it suits me, boys, to turn
over a new leaf like a chunk of recalcitrant granite. I know no other gadfly
who berates me so much; I love it; the woman came back to say she was in the way
and would we go away please it was four o'clock. Not on your life thundered the
hangman, and so it became a kind of ritual, then a game, and every day
someone came to ask after the stone, and someone would stand up to say
it has gone away, go lose yourself in studies or the wilderness;
more none can say. He just came up that day,
had a look round, and left. We aren't even sure
we saw him. It could have been wildflowers in the wallpaper
or stray ashes in the grate, no more. Then the bird came back and shat
on the stone, and that proved it was there for awhile, but somehow
that got forgotten and we were thrust out of doors to play in the rain
and sleet, and somebody got hold of the key, we entered, and presto, no one
was there, it was a different room, another empty one too, and had
obviously been vacated pretty recently. A smell of kippers
hung in the front hall. OK, I said, we must press on to the last house
they were seen in in the next block. The green cement one. But my
companions whispered why, let's ditch him at the first opportunity, no

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let's not even wait that long, which is why I came
across the lawn bruised
and moist, and trembling with pity to be let in, and
you came
and let me in. Nowhere did I have anything to say
again, but that
was not noticed until yesterday, too late to have us do
anything about it.
One source said it was the tulips, against the nice
gesture to be led and fed
and have others shut up about it. But one said, you
can't have that
and not condone the listless others who don't know
yet they're walking
in your tracks and will be sorry when they find out,
but another man joined
the woman and said you could too talk about it, it was
just a subject
and therefore forgotten, i.e. dead. And Joan she said
too it was like being dead only she didn't care, she
might as well be anyway, for all
she cared, and then someone came back with beef.
And said here
put a rose on this, you're not afraid, you do it, and
someone said, O if the law
decree it he must do it. So the one went in and the
others stayed out and waited.
And if you're not going to do it, and if it's none of
your business, why are
you going to do it, the first one said, to which that
one said: begone. You are my
business in any case and it behooves me not to be in
the shadow of you
while I wait. And then one who came from a great
distance said, why does it suit you
to be ornery, if others cannot join the general
purgative exodus, to which that one inside
said, and so it becomes you, if it become you. And
then in the shade they put their heads

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together, and one comes back, the others being a little
way off, and says, who
do you think taught you to disobey in the first place?
And he says, my father.
And at that they were all struck dumb
and left that place falling all over each other
in their haste to get away, and it was all over for that
day.
But another day came and the rice was still laying
on the ground, next to the dust ball. And one took it
up, saying,
this is all that shall be till I get back from my trip.
And the others were amused because he had never
mentioned a trip before,
but he spat at them, saying, you are too powerful now
for my injunction to take hold,
but just wait till the others see you in my chamois
costume, because if you think it's too late
now what will you think when it has gotten really out
of hand
like a vine that grows and grows and cannot stop
growing, or a fire
deep in a coal mine that burns for centuries before
anyone can do anything
about it. So he stepped down at last. And the others,
charred
and unrecognizable, concurred that something
extraordinary had taken place and that there
was nothing to be done about it. And so he went
away.

Love that lasts a minute like a filter
on a faucet, love that is always like headlights in the
glistening dark, heed
the pen's screech. Do not read what is written. In
time
it too shall become incoherent but for the time being
it is good

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just to tamper with it and be off, lest someone see
you. And when this veil
of twisted creeper is parted, and the listing tundra is
revealed
behind it, say why you had come to say it: the
divorce. The no reason, as
the plane dives up into the sky and is lost. All that
one had so carefully polished
and preserved, arranged in rows, boasted modestly to
the neighbors about,
is gone and there is nothing, repeat nothing, to take
its place. Only should we
wander a bit and then return without expectations,
does some faint impulse twitch at its
base before expiring, and a lesbian truth rise up for a
split second, and the faint
material truth dies again, and then flickers like a
post-mortem arrangement
until the rabble of the skies cries and all is assumed to
be productive.
Get your ass out of here. But it is time
to work again, but a sad, a tragic time, a time of
trifles
and vast snowbanks, and so
you put on your hat backwards and decipher it again
dutifully; it's the home stretch
but dare I say more before you think it's time to go
and they think so
but they say only, is no more time to stay *here,* in any
case we would have gone
if we knew where to go, but we have a place to go,
so we will go there. And behind
the barn it behooves us again to take up the principle,
so like the art
of tragedy and so unlike, and so we let it rest
carefully, and someone says
he would like to be off, and the others agree, it
ignites a general stampede

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before the clock closes down. In the old corners of why the situation
was ever allowed to come into existence in the first place, the nasal whining
is first heard, then perturbed groans and idle retreats into shuttered
middle distances and auxiliary alcoves. Aw, shucks, someone
seems to be repeating, we could stay here all night if we wanted to
but that couldn't bring the child back into being, and I say, I suppose so.
One's gone for some grants. Be back
when the coal trestle is finished, and idle
against the apricot lamé of the distance here. And boys I know
the distance between your empty bellies and the jobs that will not fill them,
but I still maintain you are better here, but better off far from here
where the choo-choo whistles and a deadly white wind stoops to take a few prisoners,
where we shall be pleasant once the future has had its way with us. And you know,
he said, sure, that's the way to hell and its conundrums if that's the way
you want to go, and they all said we know, we are going that way
cautiously approved of in the introduction, only it seems so full of asperities now.
And he said that's the way it was, it was a tangle and will never be anything
more than a diagram pointing you in a senseless direction toward yourself.
Sure, they come with snacks you have foreseen,
but that doesn't excuse you for having been caught in this place. And they all said
giddyap, let's go on to the next

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place on the side, for having won, and being here to
count up our winnings, which are
surely all right with us. Watch it, he said.

So the initial exuberance departed. But that was all
right, because surely
the beginning of a festival is a nice place to be, if it's
Asia, and more hogs
were brought down. But when he saw the hogs, the
owner of the grain elevator was angry
and went out. Now, there were two others who were
there. And they were
each determined to get what was coming to them.
The master returning, said OK boys,
never let it be said you didn't ask for it. And in that
moment a fuzz of bloom
was on them. Each spring the desert comes alive with
birds and flowers,
a breathtaking view at the foot of the famed
Superstition Mountains,
reported home of the Lost Dutchman Mine with its
still undiscovered caches of gold.
And all around it is fine too. The mineral springs I
wanted so much to exploit—what
does any of it matter now, now that I have found my
home in a narrow cleft
stained with Indian paintbrush and boar's blood, from
which an avenue eventually leads
to the flatter, more civilized places I have no quarrel
with either. After all,
we *have* to go in once or twice a month to pick up
supplies, the few
articles we don't grow such as coffee, to which I'm
still addicted by the way, and
records too from a local music shop, which are
important to have—no man
needs to live by his own law in the wilderness after
all, but even if he is going

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to try it is best not to let the old world slip too
casually. Rather it should come about
naturally, without too much fuss or horn tooting. And
then, by and by, if he sees
he likes it, why then there is always time to make
such decisions later on as regards
one's insurance, and such, and peter out from
there—trickle accurately
into the sand so that each drop is utilized to the max,
and then we'll see
how the desert is improving—only "improve" is a
word I don't want to use too much
either. For after all everything is good of its kind to
start with. It's all a
question only of finding out what the kind is and
letting the thing ferment
in its own bile for a few decades. By then
it should become apparent to whomever has been
watching how much the land owes us,
and how we re-distribute it wisely, if only we ever
stop to think about it. Don't
you agree? I mean, don't you see the silhouetted
foothills too? How bland and discordant,
yet after all how deeply satisfying in one's rage—and
then too the pods fall off
all at once eventually, and must rot
if the seeds are to get into the ground, providing they
are still alive and haven't rotted too.
So in all ways I think it's a question of a man
coming—he had
a chicken or something on his arm. And when he
arrived, the expected salutation
rang out like a shot; people took cover. I don't mean
I did, though. I stood up to him, just like a man, the
man I was, or is, and he, he just
looked back at me, kind of funny and defiant-like, but
he wuz saying nothing.
Too smart for that.

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Three Poems of Arab Andalusia

Ibn Zamrak

The Alhambra Inscription

I am a garden graced by every beauty:
See my splendor, then you will know my being.
For Mohammad, my king, and in his name
The noblest things, past or to come, I equal:
Of me, a work sublime, Fortune desires
That I outshine all other monuments.
What pleasure I provide for eyes to see!
In me, any noble man will take fresh heart:
Like an amulet the Pleiades protect him,
The magic of the breeze is his defender.
A shining dome, peerless, here displays
Evident splendors and more secret ones.
Gemini extends to it a touching hand,
Moon comes to parley, stars clustering there
Turn no longer in the sky's blue wheel:
In the two courts, submissively, they linger
To be of service to their lord, like slaves.
It is no marvel that the stars should err,
Moving across their marks and boundaries,
And are disposed to serve my sovereign lord,
Since all who serve him glory in his glory.
The palace portico, so beautiful
It bids to rival heaven's very vault;
Clothed in a woven raiment fine as this
You can forget the busy looms of Yemen.

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See what arches mount upon its roof
And spring from columns burnished by the light
Like the celestial spheres that turn and turn
Above the luminous column of the dawn.
Altogether the columns are so beautiful
That every tongue is telling their renown;
Black the shadow-darkened cornice cuts
Across the fair light thrown by snowy marble;
Such opalescent shimmers swarm about,
You'd say, for all their size, they are of pearl.
Never have we seen a palace rise so high,
With such a clarity, such expanse of outline;
Never did a garden brim like this with flowers,
Fruits more sweet to taste or more perfumed.
It pays the fee required of beauty's critic
Twice and in two varieties of coin:
For if, at dawn, an early breeze will toss
Into his hands drachmas of light galore,
Later, in the thick of tree and shrub,
With coins of gold the sun will lavish him.
What sired these kindred things? A victory:
Still none can match the lineage of the king.

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Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli

The Lily

Atop
The lily stems
A handiwork of Spring
The lily castles

Mounting
Guard mid silver
Turrets watchmen ring
The prince and wave
Swords of gold

Ibn Sara

Eggplant

Spheroid
Fruit, pleasing
To taste, fattened
By water gushing in all
The gardens, glossy, cupped
In its petiole, ah, heart
Of a lamb in a
Vulture's
Claws

—translated by Christopher Middleton and Leticia Garcia-Falcón

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Two Poems by Mark Halliday

Harris Lumber

The balding man behind the laminated counter has pasted parallel
hairs in place as if tacked down with tiny nails, and
around me in Harris Lumber men are ordering lengths and widths,
not doubting what's called for to build an addition,
knowing the specifics and just where a bolt will
seize the particle board and positively hold it.

Needled by the notion that a poet should know reality
or at least be on touching terms with it, stiffly shy I
roam the hardware, patting power tools with blind fingers,
making my eyes admit carpet shampoo duct tape & 3-prong cables when
all I want is bookshelves! To hold the shapes of something fluid,
noble, not measured, unbolted, *true* and strange as my secret me.

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Skirt

The very fact that her skirt swirls
bespeaks something that compels my interest
as if not because the skirt covers her ass and thighs
as if I mean not only because given a chance I'd want
very very much probably to help her take the skirt off
in a fantasy bedroom, but for some more lovely
reason
more lovely I mean because more mysterious
when she swirls my head turns on my
not-merely-biological neck
to follow the play of shadow in those folds of cloth—

in the swirling there is some meaning that draws me
without specific reference I'm saying to her vagina
somewhere beneath the skirt and what my penis might
get to do;

it's about a flowing quality in life I'm serious
about something flowing like light among branches
on a windy day, the truth or a truth of how
the beauty of our life is like a winding river
under rapid shifting clouds and how the river is
change
and change is possibility and our infinity of possibility
is
what makes us not just banal dogs wagged by our
tails.
There across the crowded room she turns and turns,
her hair swings, her skirt swirls, she doesn't know
I'm standing here with these deep insights into
everything
but if I write it all down with a lovely
swirling of its own she might read it and see
that if I stare at her it is not just the usual but
because I am *interesting* here alone at the edge of the
dance.

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A.M. Krich

At the Freud Museum

Maresfield Gardens, his last address.
The exiled Old Man talking less and less,
Too aware of his steel jaw's clicking
And the fifty minute hours ticking

Away. Tired of saying, at the best,
We can only be less unhappy than the rest;
Consoled by our hobbies, as in that vitrine
Ransomed from 19 Berggasse can be seen

His antiquities of bronze and clay
The spinster Anna dusted every other day.
And here's the couch on which H.D. flirted
And Lou Andreas-Salomé, shortskirted,

Showed her knee and fiercely penisless spoke.
He answered her with a Jewish joke.
On this chair he sat on his discontents
Inhaling another cigar, the transference

And royal perfume of the Princess Bonaparte.
He gave interpretations. She gave her heart.
He hardened his. Though we know he was jealous
Of one who didn't, wrote to Havelock Ellis,

Who had affairs and a manic-depressive wife:
"I have been a beast of burden all my life."

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from The Alchymist's Journal

Evan S. Connell

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The speaker in the narrative which follows is Paracelsus, born Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim in Switzerland c. 1490 and the best known of the sixteenth century's alchemists and physicians. In 1526, as a lecturer in medicine at the University of Basel where he had been a student, he preceded his lectures with a ritualistic burning of medical treatises, in particular those of Galen and Avicenna, discrediting not only his peers but medical practices up until then. Obviously a figure of considerable controversy, he had many enemies—who criticized him for not possessing a degree and for noted defects in his alchemical system. In 1529, he left Basel and began his wanderings through Europe, fulminating along the way. His death is a mystery—thought by some to have resulted from a drunken debauch, by others from injuries caused from being thrown down a steep hill by jealous physicians and apothecaries.*

In the annals of medicine Paraclesus was responsible for making a part of the pharmacopeia such minerals as mercury, lead, sulfur, iron and copper sulfate, among others—indicative of his neo-Platonic belief that the life of man is inseparable from

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that of the universe, and that, since the human body contains all the elements, the curing of disease is effected by the introducing of such elements back into the body.

*Evan S. Connell became interested in Paraclesus some forty years ago when he picked up a biography of the alchemist (*Magic into Science, *by Henry M. Pachter) from a pile of remaindered books. He became fascinated by the troubled doctor, never at peace with the world, alienating and disturbing everyone to such a degree that some authorities have mistakenly thought him to be the origin of the Faust legend.*

In his novel, Connell describes seven alchemists, all but Paraclesus imaginary. These are a devout novice, an elderly skeptic, a conscientious physician, a historian, a revolutionary plotting to kill the king, and a philosopher.

—G.A.P.

Heaven has become empty space for us,
a fair memory of things that were.
But our heart glows, and secret unrest
gnaws at the root of our being.

—Jung

From my father I learned astrology and medicine. Aged sixteen I entered the university at Basel but went away dissatisfied. I traveled to Würzburg yet there again I could not find what I wanted, nor at the metallurgic school of Sigismund Fugger. In the Savon valley at the convent of St. Andrew dutifully I listened to august bishops—to Mathias Schacht of Freisingen, Mathias Scheydt of Rottgach, and to Eberhardt Baumgartner. Yet all for what? I have traveled to München, Regensburg, Nördlingen, Amberg, Hongary, Meran, Krain, Mähren, St. Gallen and Kärnthen, encountering emptiness everywhere. Out of Germany I wandered through Italy and France to the gloomy Netherlands, to England, Scandinavia and Russia, but what did I gain? Aged twenty-

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three I returned to Basel, there to be crowned Professor! Hah! Like some mud-plastered Swiss boar reeking dung I pretended to wallow among obsequious compliments while plucking feathers from the tails of malt-worm pseudologues in blue velvet that strutted, preened and croaked from the dais like pigeons on a ledge. Now look at my reward! Say that I clutched a plough, greased wheels, served cabbage or played the lute—all would understand my trade. I would be welcome in any province. But for challenging dead doctrine and seeking the universal catholicon I am reviled by medicasters lost at the back of the world rammy and wet, blaring like goats to prank up themselves—gowned vultures, cock-chafers jumbling on the bed, temple thieves boasting more toes than teeth, maskers with legs aspew like arches under a bridge and tails more noteworthy than their heads. Oily saltimbanks! Brangling knaves! Fabulists! Strokers and scrapers with the eyes of blood-letting Saldanian chymists that prescribe a dying man twenty poisons for one. Mewling advocates of Greek sophistry. Red-brindled Hungarian pigs that mistake the Danube for the sea. What confounds them they curse as Beelzebub's work! Curs barking after genius that think to bite my shoe! Hah! What are their names in the street? Sycophants vomiting yellowed lies, sons of cuckolds that grope toward paradise in a milk-maid's crotch. Indentured almond-pickers prescribing slough water and sow-piss, brewing emetics of rinsings. I hear better medicine whistle from a cheesemonger's bung. So they cry out how I inveigh upon Doctors, Councillors, Chirurgeons, green-pizzle Pantologists. And this is true. But why? Because I know what they are made of because Nature has put her autograph on them. I despise the house which is faulty and lets in rain. Jiggish imposters! Rogues jabbering dead prayers! And there are others so numerous I do not name them. I have met plenty.

I am called Heretic for asserting truth, called Luther's Ass—impious—since I look to causes instead of gaping

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with disbelief like inhabitants of asylums that misjudge reality. I was not born Geber's cook—my mouth a passport, ormolu my fortune. Neither was I ordained to be a fiddler nor iniquitous privy-rat. I am no silver-sucking roach or pocky Quean. Neither would I be strangled by any woman's garter. So how would I accept the argument of lesser men with brains as blank as slates that ratify what others dictate? I hear the east wind blow through their souls. Scabby lechers on rattly shanks, atheists, flee-sprung wits, sons of potters, whoremasters scraped out of sheep, fleering grinning moldy mountebanks, liverish prostitutes hawking greasy nostrums with fingers that twitch and jerk to see a bulging leather purse, servile boasting quacks in shit-stained breeches, malsters, sodomites fornicating upon rear stoops with spaniels or kitchen help—how many mumble and glory at the title of Physician? Doctor Slop! Puppets skipping on a showman's wire with brains delivered to them backward like a clyster, drips from a waning moon, thoughts scattered like nails in a peddler's pack, emptying wormy cups while attending Egyptian athanors, hop-whistling rancid quarreling puking disciples, meat-shop philosophers ignorant of true medicine's requisite—Sapentia! Tetrick bloat-herrings waxed fat with deceit that set up practice among hedgerows from Prague to Geneva and market vermifuge less salubrious than frog guts in a wine glass, all spouting windy proverbs for love of a florin! Summer breeds not half so many mosquitoes as those accursed horse pintles ripped with lice! The severity of their offenses I will transcribe on their foreheads because I know their balance-sheet.

They say I am full of knots. This is true. Like a bear cub was I suckled among pine forests. Like damp moss do I cling to what I knew best early in the morning. How could I wear gossamer? Why would I go prancing through female apartments? What man is sweetly turned if in the province of his birth they do not weave or spin silk? And I was born Theophrastus! I am the Prince of

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Physicians—monarcha medicorum. Aureolus I am called and so be it. Was a tongue endowed with speech? No. It is the presiding spirit grown impatient with vacuity since every creature is compacted of elements. Therefore I condemn all those that distil by prescription as Chymists. Are they like a good tailor that carefully cuts a cloak? No. I denounce them because they would lay straw in a sick man's bellie. Juggling sophists! Catchpoles! They do not encounter infirmity but at the declining. Gravely do they march forth like judges to give peremptory sentences of death, thereby expecting to be honored as prophets with deep prescience! Bah! Unctuous rakes honing after wonders that neigh toward other men's wives—shanks wet with rot—stout on porridge and mutton and stinking like a goblin's fart. Back-sliders with the elevation and ostent of serpents that would subtract honor from jackals by their presence. So they come pouring across good reports, and does not a pig call a pig gorgeous? See the consul of Astorza! Niger! See Muffel parade through Nürnberg! Hah! But this is not their end. This is not all. I know of others. Black bougiers with kneecaps made of horn which if they quit praying would bite their tongues for devotion, slip-weary toothless maskers with raddled bones struggling hard as January to hoist one foot across the door-sill and scratch their balls. Croups to affright Asmodeus, drizzling yellow or green as a rainbow. They collect like August flies at the lip of a milk-pail to drink and discuss philosophy. I have watched them draw out figures and hawk wax talismans or amulets filched from a grimoire at Ratisbon. Philtres with grainy powders they provide, hence they denigrate with covin the true art of alchymy. Has not all jurisdiction its limit? They would plunder what cannot be replaced. Yet as the guilty by their rhetoric exercise unwarranted dominion, so the moon indifferently presides above good and evil. This is loathsome! How are the travesties of invidious art expunged? Groveling kabbalists know less than children shut inside a narrow room

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who because they have observed little must doubt the wealth of exteriorities. False doctors like vile preachers go lying and masquerading and mincing across a stage spun out of hope, pinchbeck flea-stung carcasses indentured to worms mistaking turds for topaz. How do they know the neck of the afflicted? I alone am monarcha medicorum that through unremitting study has become Prince of Physicians and therefore they hate me. Such is the lot or malison of genius. I bid them warm their buttocks in Satan's vestibule! I do not copy inferiors. I am Paracelsus.

Cacophrastus! So they snap their teeth, declaiming vituperative poetry composed in hell for my benefit. Cacophrastus! Yellow cringing curs snarl and bark. The least hairs of my breech display more learning than their mightiest. My shoebuckles shine brighter than Avicenna and Galen in conference. Theophrastus am I!—skillful, zealous, adept at the Holy Kabbala, archenemy to distemperature, advocate of theology, ascetic defender of freedom, illustrious pharmacist, bald foe of folly. Am I not Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim? I am Helvetius Eremita, Philippus, Suevas, Arpinus, Germanus. Or I am the Luther of physicians—Lutherus medicorum. But what difference does it make? I heal patients abandoned by charlatans to sickness or death, restore youth to the aged with marvelous elixirs. And by our Lord I would this gleaming pate might fend off gnats as well as I fend off academic sophistry. Hah! What good is a shining coat-of-mail and buckler? Why gag on stinking panaceas falsely concocted by apothecaries in sculleries? Dizzards! Graziers! Chymists swarming through filthy basements! Vermin begot to brew up foul broth! Dung-prophets! Quack-salvers! None can equal Paracelsus. I am wiser by seventy that all such cod-merchants. Thisselwarps! Whifflers! Daubers! Puffers that coagulate, sublimate and distil—tending bubbling apparatus toward what? I would sooner tabulate every butterfly in Hol-

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land. I am the most puissant and numinous doctor on earth—ruled not by the motionless fabric of constellations but incessant study. There be a more pregnant sense to my doctrine than their wits construe.

I hold all secrets of Nature, Magnalia Artium, by which God endows a great physician. Let windly raving clotpoles claim I am drunk. I am lucid. If I knew not all bones and varieties of human flesh and where each was placed, how could I choose the palliative that each wound needs? Leech-doctors say I am irreverent—coarse and uncivil—because on Saint John's Day I sprinkled with gunpowder and sulfur the fatuitous books of bygone theoreticians that went up in smoke to vast applause from students, which is what ancient science merits! Rheumy academics join hands to clap against me. Why? Because I illuminate the fount, progress and fall of their tedious conceit. They parade in sheep's russet, parched brains riveled like apples. I lift my hind leg at them! Costermongers! University catechism is a mildewed cloak for pedagogues hatched in a viper pit wistly dreaming antique fable. Why expound the opinions of others—Dioscorides, Galen, Macar? What is learned by rote? No reliance have I set on Avicenna's consorts because Nature is the physician, not I. It is she that composes, not I. From her alone I take my orders and study the art of her pharmacies—behind what leaf she writes each virtue, in which box each is kept. Not in Mesue nor Lumine nor Praeposito. No teacher have I met surmounting this world save God, snakes, magic and angels. I say there will be dowsers and spagyri and Archei and they will have Quintum Esse and tincture, so then where will your soup kitchens go? What will become of quacks that give up a patient to die while working out his complexion from stools and piss? Joskins! Drovers fixed at their poison! Wicked, wrong, unjustifiable—so do they brabble against my meteorics, my physics, my theories, my prac-

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tice. How might I seem less than erroneous or strange? What greatness is there that was not first maledicted?

Pseudo-physicians suppose that by jugglery and cunning they can cheat Nature out of her dues, thereby acting with impunity against the manifesto of God—behavior at once intolerable and specious, a summit of vanity. But for the novelty of constructing artificial systems why should we desert common paths? Nor should a doctor pluck apart a sick man's wallet while prevaricating, ramping—spewing foaming gibberish at spotted invalids weak with anguish who conclude this must hold meaning—because such art does not consist of healing the sick but of creeping toward favor with the rich and powerful like some moldy itinerant smiling and bowing, scraping muddy boots on the white step of a nobleman's kitchen. O, it is natural that there should be crafty swindlers laying hollow claim to the honored title of alchymist while scheming after coins, darkening the moon, sifting down like famished locusts whistling depravity, glossing deceit, doubtful of what they themselves have uncovered. How ingeniously they contrive to answer urgent questions posed by desperate innocents—praising agate liquefied, jaspar metamorphosed, frost congealed, or the marvelous values of excrescence. Bah! I hear them spout inanities while stuffing contributions into their split breeches. Who has not seen it?

The truthful physician prescribes nothing without its merit, disdaining inmedical calamities, avoiding what is mendacious or absonant. Nor will he lie or cog or foist restoratives extracted from leper skat and maggots on credulous patients. I see the moribund that fall subject to phlegm or deliracy sacrifice a fortune to apothecaries puffed up with turgent titles—sails plumbed on empty wind—purveyors of fraud greasing their fundament at sight of a gold mark. Weasels flaunting velvet caps! Dogs

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trot forth to sniff their vomit! Chickens clustered in a knot provide more nobility, peacocks choked with rage sound less vain and stupid. As if gabbling fraud might rinse their slimy mouths! As if the Holy Ghost of Christian theology should countenance imposture! Lacking skill enough to carve initials on a cherrypit, Cuman asses capering about in lion-skins, ulcerated flatulent druggists with oat-cake faces, three-fingered magicians quick to mulct apoplectic curates—they traffic lotion to soothe the spirit while Lazarus lies howling outside the gate. Christ bid them greet the arrow at mid-flight or collapse in joint depravity with the inward grace of donkeys whose latter vent winks open more modestly than their hearts. Grazing sheep would give up grazing to see such Turkish medicasters. What brains they own they keep sealed in bottles beyond the moon.

I have heard doctors aspire to the wisdom of forest apes while espousing an imbalance among humors: phlegm, bile, blood yellowed or black. Rot! Disease hides externalities that are its cause, selecting the most susceptible organs for degenerative goals. Men fall subject to more illnesses than a horse and computation by planets is but one aspect. I say sickness arouses waves of heat throughout the body because its constituents have been twisted, tied into knots. Consequently, balance is restored with assuasives such as essentiam antimonii, aurum-potabile, oleum solis, materiam perlarum, arcana quintae-essentiae, aquavitae and so forth. And I believe man cannot enough praise God or give thanks with all diligence for his generosity in providing these because they suffice. And one morning I think all of this will be heard as clearly as the cataract of the Rhine.

Now what injures a man is what heals him, therefore similars are good. Does the liver seeks its medicament in sugar, manna, honey, or a polypody fern? No. Like affects like. Shall heat be a cure for cold or the opposite?

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Seldom in anatomy's order. It would be wild disproportion to find a cure in contraries. If a child should ask his father for bread would he be given a snake? Hence they are not physicians that prescribe acid if alkali is needed. Gall must have what it asks, the liver and the heart as well. Why? Because nature admires logic.

There are several kinds of salt in man that devour and gnaw like hidden fires and one may kindle the next. This is true also of wolves and other animals whose bodies are surfeited by such salts as arsenic which crawl about among the organs putrefying and digesting. Now, just as we are taught through the seething of these minerals how food is torn by interior viscera, so we make further discoveries with the preparation of alum or the fuming of lime. Things are sought and found, yes, but sometimes prove difficult to separate.

The carpenter thinks out a cottage—how it should be built—and then he goes to work. Not so the physician who does not think out how a disease should be, since he did not make it. Nature invents disease and therefore knows its constitution, so if a doctor would know what to do he must acquaint himself with what she has to teach. The carpenter may hew down a tree and work with this as he needs or pleases. Not so the doctor, because medicine does not wish to be altered—like the garden of Attalus where nothing grew except venomous plants.

Maladies that afflict mankind are not inherent but arise out of sources directed against the cycle which penetrate and suck and dilute our vital essence. I say that Magnes Microcosmi—since it is composed of urine, blood, excrement and hair—when it is applied to the corpus it will absorb vitality like a sponge drawing water, thereby alleviating the inflammation of harmonious members due to congestion by precipitant fluids. But illness acquired from a patient manifests itself elsewhere because all

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things correspond, hence the toxicant released from a body must contaminate others. Remedies invert, breeding their own abuse.

Because the earth has been enclosed within a vaporous sphere as the egg is enclosed within a shell and cosmic influences converge toward a nucleus, it follows that epidemics develop when miasma pollutes this involucrum—which is not strange. Possibilities could not be limited by our knowledge of them since who among us pretends to fathom God?

Some argue how man collects understanding from his own self and from constellations, so that if one's star is favorable one may learn everything. But if each man was born to inherit the kingdom of God how shall he be a child of constellations which are doomed to perish? And therefore how should one seek wisdom except where it resides beyond the stars and planets?

Who could believe that there lives concealed inside an egg the animus of a bird with all of its members and feathers and whatever else pertains thereto? Similarly who would say of gold that within it lies a recipe for universal healing? Yet just as the white and the yolk conspire to bring forth a ringdove or a finch, so must time, Nature and alchymic art conspire to fertilize the Grand Catholicon. This is because of nature's predictability since everything that takes place must coincide with reason.

What is heavier than gold? What weighs less than the wind? What could be whiter than a swan yet blacker than a crow? What is more hurtful than a serpent? Are not these things all in Nitre? Yes. Professors cry out with a single voice, saying fix the volatile and volatilize that which is fixed, then you will find the universal panacea. But a sensual eye deprived of light—what does it per-

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ceive except darkness? Thyme is seen to bloom throughout the year while the crocus has a moment in autumn. Experience does not run one way but many thousand ways.

I say the martiality of a sickness is enhanced by its aura blossoming from the center yet clinging to its locus. Thus, if a magnet shall be placed upon the center it must attract a widening aura, thereby circumscribing the flow of disease. But how so? Because metallic particles infest man's blood. By contrast, the scent of an orchid travels from its petals into the atmosphere yet this aura cannot be circumscribed. I do not know why. The curve of thinking has no end.

I say it is clear how incorporeal pernicious influences are capable of burning and devouring, such as vitiation of the surrounding air which secretly encourages impure vapors seeking entrance to the body, or the convulsions engendered by drinking decadent water so that a victim falls down writhing and vomiting. Thus the pharmacology of heaven should be studied much as we diagram the veins of a suffering patient if we would devise an efficacious cure for astralic impairment because analeptics subside under the reign of malevolent planets. Illness withers if the regent compounding it does also and is a mandate from God which we should recognize, since he administers to our necessity. If we scorn a light above, how does it reveal our path? How does it assist our progress?

I have said that chymists who seek out Nature's probities or inclinations should consult within themselves, only then addressing externalities. Why is this? Because all things proceed from pole to pole, as we learn from Egyptian tombs where painted noblemen march forward to the past, preceding their descendants

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in hieratic order. Now this is harmonious, marvelous and immutable.

I have said that alchymists plot the course of each disease with its premonitory symptoms because a disease is a plant that will develop into a tree if it has not been rooted out while it is young. I say a child is able to cut down an oak soon after it springs from the acorn, but given time enough this will require a strong man with an ax.

Pseudo-alchymists that labor against quicksilver, sea salt and sulfur dream of hermetic gold through transformation, yet they fail to grasp the natural course of development since what they employ are literal readings of receipts. Accordingly they bring baskets of gilded pebbles to sell, or drops of vinegar in cloudy alembics—futile panaceas meant for a charnel house. This is false magistery.

Thousands proclaim themselves Adept that have dealt little with spagyric matter. By such conceit they disenfranchise the conscientious aspirant. Puffers abound—monk-bellied wizards proposing deleterious recipes in lieu of knowledge. Granted a crock of paste I doubt some could fix a fractured pot. Their persuasions are wretched, false and degenerate, their devices precarious.

I have watched charlatans with the help of greasy advocates cloaked in malfeasance skipping and bleating merry as goats. But as a metallic stone attracts and repels iron particles according to its animus, so does every man attract or repel effluvia for evil or good. And what he is, that will he be at his death since the spirit does not deviate from itself. Consequently each man endows the atmosphere with a vestige and register of his life. And I say that as the angry light of dawn will diminish a candle,

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so does alchymic magistery eclipse and shame the artifice of squint-eyed gut-bucket butchers serving slabs of deceit. I would not award them Christian burial. I would hang them upright like Diogenes to scare off crows. Cucurbit, alembic, furnace and retort—only thus shall we hear the human predicament annunciated, since within our Philosophic Egg begins a fabulous process of fermentation, distillation and extraction.

Cacophrastus! Hah! Cacophrastus is how they deride me because I endorse principles, not catechism. Mock-doctors swaggering round about in spangled coats! Foals that presume themselves stallions! Buggers leading one another so that if one tumbles in a ditch the others follow, unable to separate their brains from their asses. Piebald knaves! I have watched them coaxing victuals out of monks; I have seen the ravens that supervise murder rise screaming from their perch, for leaven and ferment are Christ; and I say Verbum Domini is the word of the father that has become Matter and is the material food of the soul. And such a word is present in each object in which it dwells. And I have seen them worse than Archbishops order up relics to fumble at a sick man's mouth. But I say sickness is neither endogenous nor constitutional, and a mineral seed is required to engender what once was sown into the earth by our Lord God at a time when he regretted the creation of man.

I say that whatsoever fills up a man's heart shall overflow into his mouth. And what his heart desires, that do his eyes seek after. And things irrevocably incline toward similitude because they have some rational or active virtue that directs and counsels them—as fire experiences the urge toward fire, water toward water—which accounts for the passionate flight of the soul and the body's deep unrest. Now I say all of this will be understood by

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those with a legacy of interior senses while to others it must seem incomprehensible.

I say the heart is an instrument of very great magnitude whose greatness cannot be expressed. And the mind as well—this is very great and nothing can emerge from its sphere that was not drawn in. And whatever the heart has attracted or whatever was drawn into the mind I say will expend itself searching for an exit. And it is perilous to live ignorant of this relationship.

I say that six Tempers dominate the mind, whereby they govern and rule over humanity. These are passion, fright, alarm, joy, envy and desire. Therefore the imagination must be supervised since no place is too far for it to go and each mind impresses another, wherever it reaches. This is because not one being is able to survive apart from the next, nor from the Almighty, because all divide His wisdom.

Each being possesses a Chaos, yet if transported elsewhere it will die. If that Chaos be subtle, its being is gross, or if gross, we find subtlety within. Therefore a corpus should be gross if it would glide unharmed through aether, much as gnomes with subtle bodies can proceed through rock. Even so, rigid matter is capable of piercing supple matter just as a stick is thrust into water or a stone may descend into the depths of a pool. Conversely, whenever the matrix does not take offense it is possible to extract a substance, which is the case when fishes are withdrawn while leaving the river unperturbed. So does base mineral hope to improve or glorify or transform its status. And that this may occur cannot be doubted. The omnipotence of God flows unrestricted.

What vast surfeit of disclosures men catalogue upon deficient understanding. To assess an object below or above the animus presiding at its birth or to prize some creature more or less highly than its creator must injudi-

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ciously subvert both values, which is how we behold existences doubled by the looking glass. Therefore we should estimate qualities not by their outwardness but by what they deposit within.

Because every item is equivalent in goodness to the next, as the carbuncle is not better nor worse than tuff stone, nor evergreen than cypress, so each time we valuate gold above silver we do this out of greed. Both are excellent. Consequently our judgment is developed not through wisdom but through lamentable logic. Now, should a dog fall sick it will devour grass, but would this be suitable treatment for sick men? No. Yet how very often I remark similitudes, and I think egregious pharmacopeia astonishes me less than the gratitude of moribund patients. How is this? Possibly by virtue of imagination we are able to find what we seek, a faculty derived from above since it is evident how stars preoccupy themselves with men.

It is true that stars habitually sympathize with mankind, but which mercies proceed from the mansions of planets? A physician after he calculates his patient's horoscope may deduce an origin to malignancy and prophesy its end. However, each disease boasts five causes—each subject to five aspects—thus no interpretation should be thought infallible. And it is true that proficiencies contribute to failure, so emptiness comes riding. Obstinate doctors adhere to foolish diagnoses more tenaciously than starfish clinging to a barren shelf, but as I am a prudent physician I do not gape upon antique charts drawn for musty lectures. My flesh, my blood and my bones constitute the merchandise I have given up for knowledge. And my spirit have I offered as pawn. And I believe God encourages me to know, but also to doubt.

Why would a man be anxious to eat and drink and breathe? Because he is conjoined with elements of food

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and water and atmosphere. Or why does he avoid the cold? Because without warmth he would shiver miserably and complain. This is true because we are made of mutual associations since we have been coupled to all and do not live apart from rudimentary influences, just as we have criminals that flourish and profit beneath planetary conjunctions. Therefore I say the alchymist must understand cosmology because a doctor that treats only the effect of disease is like one that would excoriate and drive winter aside by brushing a little snow from his door.

I say the body demands familiar nutriment for support, albeit we need not chew bones to replenish our bones nor swallow and digest veins to regenerate our veins. The living corpus manages to subsidize each necessity, although it is hard to explain how this is accomplished. By what method does bread transmute itself into blood? Nevertheless this occurs, and upon great similarities of hermetic art we anticipate a transmutation of dross, which implies universal regeneration.

Terrestrial and sidereal worlds converge upon mankind so that if any pharmacist would mitigate or alleviate fatal consequences, such as edemata from French plague, he must learn what is implicit. Hence an understanding of herbs is good and it is wise to appreciate Laudanum, which is very strong. Now, cinnabar commonly is florid but with albification it can be instructed to simulate Lead, by whose virtue it expects to acquire importance. Thus, every animate substance or creature would modify its attributes, while latencies must be sought. Even so, a sapient chymist will memorize the accustomed station and rising of stars if he seeks to maintain tendencies within a pattern of their setting.

Man's reality is but an exposition of forces and essences identical to congeries on a higher scale which represent the firmament. And beside and within us all is

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reflected until we apprehend ourselves as well as the circumstances of our environment. Thus we attempt to perceive, foresee and augurate. Did not William of Paris at his laboratory construct a Brazen Head which nodded, beckoned and spoke to visitors in the voice of a man? Accordingly we manifest more than brief conjunctions drawn of flesh, bone and nerve. Upon measurable degrees we exemplify the cognizant universe. So therefore we must not be fictive but represent a palpable quintessence, which was the ambition of our Creator.

If we wish to illustrate the several properties of mankind would we not trace in miniature a precise copy or replica of our cosmos? If so, then what persuades us to reiterate and duplicate mistakes through treacherous dissimulation? Is it not more logical to collaborate toward a melioration of Lead, thereby to form and guarantee what we anticipate? By day we are wont to clasp hands and replenish our lives with honor while by night we turn obligations into cobwebs, deceiving ourselves under nets, entanglement and falsehood. What beggary is this? Have we not ourselves become beggars begging at our own door?

Often have I talked with Oporinus of a path to the Citadel where an inimitable Infant slumbers, encircled by dragons. I have told Oporinus that lineage and privilege mean little, that only distress has meaning, since which of us is exempt? And I have explained how if an alchymist's heart play false so must his prescription. Sooty empiricks puffing and blowing make wrong turnings. Divided ashes lie estranged.

I have taught Oporinus how nothing concerning us be declared irrelevant and foreign. Why has God endowed men with thought unless they should apprehend their predicament? For too many is thought considered a vacant entity, but this is misguidance. Thoughts have ponderable crystalline shapes inexplicably formed of nutri-

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tious components within the soul much as ice crystals develop in freezing water. Hence, we may impose upon all men our disposition toward maleficence or beneficence, generosity or selfishness, since thoughts being formed of quiet volition may be thrown like icicles into the mental spheres of others. Why? Because the world's huge frame is known to encompass all and the focus of meditation appears very great.

I have advised Oporinus to scrutinize with utmost diligence ancient manuscripts because each opens against its opposite. Thus he that observes, studies and learns during his tenure on earth shall be dressed with gold during the Resurrection, while not one that has loitered should aspire to superiority. This is because exploration leads upward.

Oporinus would have our secret delivered into his hands. I respond by asking how he would catalogue the structure of rainbows, or if he be employed with Nilotic darkness, or if he has found absolution. Let him think privately on the melioration of nature and reflect how it is impossible to grasp what is first or last, or take hold of the first that is not also last. So do we annotate the circularity of Man and we call this ubiquitous since it is identified with its subject, and no man has discovered how to escape. Should Oporinus climb as high as heaven it would be there.

I have said that in God's presence the most execrable vices of our world disseminate. How is this explained? I point out how treasure flows to chattermag niggard hucksters marketing pinchbeck remedies meant for a Lazaret while the best endure calumny, ridicule, neglect, ingratitude—but to what purpose? Look at what has occurred since the beginning.

Let us assume the throne of heaven was framed within and that every corporeal benefit has been tabulated. Say

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that a physician controverts himself at midnight, then he could be no itinerant hunched on the doorstep of humanity. Neither is he pseudo-medicus or imposter quick to interpret the allegoric journey of a pilgrim, having met in each some hollow glory.

Many will charge according to their expedient how upheavals and the deaths of kings are adumbrated by comets approaching, yet our worldly lot rests on the palm of an Indecipherable who is its commencement and its end, who displaces sceptres and crowns and tumbles down the mightiest. So must the worst and finest tumble in dust upon august authority, commingled with a universe of streaming shadows.

Various planets and dominant stars spread their glory between Flanders and Brazil. Others thoughtfully conceal their light, for what emprize we do not know. Similarly, invidious spirits often deceive or hide their employments from the inquisitive novice. Yet between microcosm and macrocosm every item stands related, albeit we hear much opposed logic formed in concert with strange denial.

I say the impetus of ascending planets invigorates animals with harmonious organs no less than minerals or vegetables. We ask why. But what is planetary exhalation save its vital elixir? We see one patient get up and walk away from his bed while for no cause his neighbor vomits and writhes and dies, so it is impossible to contest the power of heavenly light. We are no more devised from insensate clay than is an herb blossoming out of mud.

Should it be God's will to instruct an alchymist at his art, He will dispense understanding at the appropriate season. But if by this wisdom He concludes that any man was unfit or should He decide that irrevocable mischief would ensue, then that sanction is withheld. Neither would God undertake to show one man for a principality

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so that others crowd up against him piteously bleating—or go trotting behind him like sheep after a ram. And he that fails to read blackness at the beginning shall fail at his magistery.

I have said men descry what pleases them because what appears reasonable, that is what they approve. Out of Electrum Magicum they make mirrors which are fundamentally conjoined, as Jupiter conjoins with Venus, since this is nature's scheme and geniture. Hidden causes. Future portents.

The beneficial aspects of numerous herbs have been concealed, as are their insalubrities, yet we know how to discover them just as we are able to perceive the dispositions of cattle which never have learned how to speak or explain themselves. Why is this? Because nothing moves on the somnolent sea-deep nor in the firmament that was ordained to thwart us, neither fish nor plant nor animal nor bird. All matter is subordinate to the enduring and imperial quest of humanity—its premise. Was not man appointed to explore? Was he not royally baptized? It has become his mission to dazzle the elements. How swiftly he strides forth dressed with jewels to confront the universe. One that wrought miracles they called Galen—Paradoxopoeus—which is the essence of every man. And I say that prodigies which exceed their measure draw destruction on their wake.

Now, some find great virtue in the herb Centaurea, yclept Isiphilon by Chaldees, which if powdered and intermingled with lamp oil and the lapwing's blood and set to burning—all those clustered around will cry how they are witches, and say of one whose face lifts toward heaven that his foot yet touches earth. But in so doing they make up a vitious black tincture which provokes almighty God. Groping, tense, men split their brains. They seek to use the wind.

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I have said that things proceed less by lottery than election and humanity's passage appears wrathful, senseless, aberrant, replete with desperate biting, while the stipulations of life are complex illusions resembling colors in an artist's picture, being not in fact yellow or blue or green, merely seeming so to the eye of the beholder.

I believe illness substitutes for the spectrum of health its own hue—monarchial and threatening. Pliny the Elder has counted up three hundred varieties or sorts of disease but I account others, curious disaffections to every part. And I say that those afflicting us differ from those past, thus new distillations must be ordered because each object and phenomenon has its hour.

As the sky possesses constellations so is each man mightily constellated within himself. Then why is he unlike animals or plants or metals that do not deviate from what they are? Why is he alone cursed with a necessity for transmutation? What is incommensurable about him? What urges him to emulate the grison, the fox, the goat, the blood-drinking nightswift? I say that if he would reclaim the nature of his inheritance he must be born again. And I say miracles of the soul exceed the heavenly dispensation.

I believe providence contemplates the blind mole squirming through abysmal darkness and declares its vision adequate. Why? Because to look further would burden this poor animal with unremitting discontent by exposing the tenebrous walls and limits of its existence. So do we observe timorous men who, perceiving that they have burrowed up toward daylight, hastily dig themselves downward into comfortable obscurity. Still others like foolish birds standing on a withered bough chatter with amazement at the dawn. Others lift both hands to praise the incipient day as night slips west. Providence

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apportions to each—to each man, beast, insect and mineral—the animus of its being.

Now, if earth be a cryptogram burning with significance, the House of Man in which ubiquitous houseflies predicate brief lives, let us equate the Holy Spirit with a glowworm. Does not the humblest caterpillar symbolize transfiguration? Therefore let us say quicksilver represents man's conscience whose existence must be verified, having lapsed into desuetude. We see mercuric particles cling to the rim of a dusty crucible, hence we are entitled to say of our conscience that it endures, that it refuses to forget.

Minerals sink, feathers float, serpents upon their course change direction. We do not know why. Quicksilver escapes from alluvial gold—aureate sperm of cinnabar. Why is this? Meanwhile fumbling neophytes submit to misjudgment by Macar, by Galen, by Dioscorides. Even so, they anticipate success! But I say alchymic magistery cannot be conferred by diploma nor through philosophic reflection, nor by those souffleurs that burn charcoal, since being duped by their own ignorance they make dupes of others. I avow that as God spoke radiance was formed, departing from its limb. Then God spoke further, confused elements became separated and what was chaos understood its balance.

Rain falls to the earth not all at once but drop after drop because if it is poured down too abundantly it would destroy everything, just as if a gardener should inundate his plants. From this it is evident how nature distributes her benefits. Therefore the soil of any province tends toward infertility through exhaustion and lies unconscious for long intervals. Similarly, those remote mines which provide silver and gold often exhaust their energy and insist upon millennia of rest before they consent to additional labor. Now this is because minerals germinate and grow like wheat from their elementary

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matrix, hence it must be useless to contemplate or cry aloud or beg for valuables that do not exist.

When at the end of time all things throw aside their cover every chymist and physician must stand up to be recognized so that we learn which kept to the foundations of science, which did not. Then all that were conceived and flourished emptily and stood notorious behind clap-trap recitals greasily prevaricating—I say their gullets will enlarge at the hour of their disgrace! What do they teach about Pliny's herbs? Have they learned the three parts of wisdom? And how was it that those promising vast wealth to others are themselves importunate beggars? Cacochymists whose tongues ride before their wits like a gentleman's usher! Alleging familiarity with Avicenna of Bokhara, with Velascus and with De Vigo—how do they call themselves learned? Times return, rhetoric yields its measure highest to lowest, logic makes a circuit. Hah! We will count how many rich and redoubtable physicians tucked flagrant ignorance beneath chitchat to the detriment of reliable doctors. I say those that truthfully prescribed will be distinguished from muckhill daubers and guild-hall apprentices. Each deserves his merit, so each shall acquire the palm. Proscription to such swaggering glistering rogues that exult with the title of Alchymist! They oppugn nature, boasting how they know anatomy that cannot identify tartar stuck to their own teeth! Liars! Fugitives! Horse-leech fops! Executioners! Purse-milkers. Yet as the tare is plucked out of ripening wheat so must the melody of pretence reverberate until Whitsunday. The murderer does not escape the crushing wheel, the thief a gallows-loop, the fish its appointed net, the fox his destined hunter.

Because we have made illustrious promises let us keep them albeit the earth quiver underfoot, since to be perceptibly swallowed and wholly to disappear is less dishonorable than egregious dissimulation. There is but one single instrument laboring mightily toward perfection,

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which is grace within the soul. Lies corrode a susceptible heart and the universe resembles a Harp or a Lute, since occurrences in any part resonate elsewhere.

Be diligent, I have told Oporinus, because the mind proves adroit at generating monsters, since as we draw shapes upon canvas or wood and reconstruct our similitudes with marble so does the mind formulate basilisks which act against us—contriving aspects and molds of grim apprehension. But why? Because nature acts out of habit, she considers only one way suitable and from this she departs with reluctance to create aberrations. Why is this? We could as well ask what accounts for the soft and feline influence of the moon.

I would have Oporinus learn how undines beneath the surface long for sunshine and how their magnetism contrives to pass through impregnable rock for the pleasure of gnomes. Nor should this be disputed, since we know all things aspire to consanguinity. All experience summer and have their winter, all know the taste of fruit.

I say we are kept from seeing aetherea by the fallibility of our senses and therefore the mind's eye opens to assist these inadequate organs. Now this is most true with herbs or plants because they teach better lessons than stultified pedagogues pawing and braying from the rostrums of colleges. So have I taught Oporinus about this herb called Matuchiol yclept Heliotropium, which revolves according to the sun. If collected beneath the sign of Leo and wrapped in fescue or laurel and accompanied by the sharpened tooth of a wolf, then no man shall hear a single word uttered against him, only peaceable words. And if he falls asleep on this herb then he could not lose his property to a thief. Moreover, if this herb should be secreted in a chapel where women go that have slighted their vows with copulation—well, they cannot walk past. Or a woman that has clasped Urtica to her breast—she would not succumb to deleterious fancy. Also, there is an herb called Celandine which is gathered where swallows

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nest, or eagles, that if any man accept it together with a badger's heart he will beat back enemies, annihilating them in argument. Furthermore this same herb if it be laid against a sick man's brow—if he should die he would rise up singing with a great voice. Or the leaf of Periwinkle, if eaten together by any man with his wife, they will lie down in love. This much is true and natural. But of the Mandrake which is alleged to groan or shriek when it is torn out of the earth, I am not persuaded. I do not claim to have heard this voice, albeit I listen for cries of anguish. I am positive that God has given to these herbs inexplicable virtues and powers that free men from infirmities to the end that they might sojourn a little longer. And I am convinced of how death itself cannot imagine the fatal circumstance, but strives eagerly and diligently in order that it may not overlook the appointed minute, proving obedient to its master.

I have said that all metals labor with disease, except gold which enjoys perfect health by the grace of elixir vitae. I have taught Oporinus how this metal is sweet and exhibits such goodly lusters that multitudes would look toward gold instead of the generous sun overhead. In fixity or permanence this substance cannot be exceeded and therefore it must gleam incorruptibly, being derived from an imperial correspondence of primary constituents that makes it capable of magnifying every subject, of vivifying lepers, of augmenting the heart. Conceived by our gracious Lord, it is a powerful medicament. False gold, which is a simulacrum boasting no remedial virtue, assaults internal organs and therefore it should be abjured, since the alchymic physician repudiates all meretricious matter. We must not keep true gold beyond its measure but distribute what we hold, allegorically reminding each man of an earthly choice he is obligated to make between damnation and bliss.

Oporinus longs to know the components of imperative minerals. So do many dig deep yet glance by the royal

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vein, mistakenly posting their elevation against some shadow cast at daybreak. I have explained how seven metals coalesce in a private hour, which is the mystery of electrum and a source of corrective medallions, of sigils and bells to benefit the impropriator. Now, any paralytic that wears a ring pressed from this metal will rise up and stagger away without assistance. Epileptics or spastics will recoup their faculties. Others also profit, because this substance defies corrupt or antipathetic regents while radiating and condensing the influence of host planets. That is why electrum was utilized by the Magi and Chaldeans. But I would teach Oporinus how men undo themselves in the egg which hatched them. So are they brought to assize.

I have warned my famulus to note how stars on their progress confer blessings. Still, like the mind they subject humanity to various deceits and provide less guidance than surpassing folly. Therefore, with sidereal phenomena infinite patience may be required to identify and solicit one unwavering light among fickle multitudes. And such is the legacy I would leave which I admonish him to respect, since whatever a man thinks or accomplishes, or what he teaches or what he hopes to learn, must have its right proportion. I say it must follow its line and hold within the circle to the end that nothing may exceed its circle, so that there be no crooked thing and the balance be preserved. Water rushes downhill full of desire to unite with the ocean. Heaven exhausts itself, new times come.

I have grown old. It is useless to swim against the current. I will turn and go home. I will go to the place I know best. I will go to Einsiedeln—to the episcopal see on the river Salzach and I will live in the corner house. I will return to the Hermitage and in the water sliding beneath my window I will see the stones of Hohensalzburg fortress. It is time.

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Never have I known Thy peace, Lord. I have not been touched. I was a pilgrim all of my life, a stranger. I was a stranger, an alien, a pilgrim. So let there be sung the first and seventh and thirtieth psalms and let a penny be given to a poor man by the door with each singing. Such is my will and testament who was christened to honor the Greek from Eresus—Tyrtamos. And I have descended from the soldier that was Conrad Bombast, feudal tenant to a count of Würtemberg, and my father Wilhelm, who was no community bath-chirurgeon but an illustrious doctor that got his licentiate at Tübingen. Aureolus am I nominated by feckless disciples licking my heels hoping to flatter me. And my members have been carved out by God with my conditions and properties and habits bequeathed from that in-breathing of life where things are awarded to men. I do not fear death. Has not the serpent Ourobouros sacrificed himself to himself for the birth of knowledge? Does not wisdom born of adversity dispel subsequent affliction? So much do I understand without understanding, who was christened Theophrastus von Hohenheim, because I would not argue the proceedings of God.

Arrived this day out of emptiness some scrofulous itinerant with his remedy for universal mischief. Serious in aspect, pocked like one half-dead of plague, looped about his neck a green silk ribbon with three octangular medals displaying a new moon and the sun beneath an unfamiliar constellation whose relevance I could not guess. His clear pitiless eyes did not blink—consummate proof of a rogue without goodness to his being, on whose tongue the Lord's Prayer would fester like monkshood. Should a man's soul be scourged he may quote celestial spirits and make diagnoses, but as he shall depart from rectitude so must he be absent from paradise. Therefore my visitant was no physician.

Rumors of a wandering magus . . .

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from You've Had Your Time

Anthony Burgess

It was a glorious early summer, all blossom and cuckoos. Lynne served herself gin and cider and sternly pronounced that she was not, in future, to be crossed. Neither of us attributed her condition to alcohol. We slept in the same bed and I clasped her for comfort. There was a half-hearted resumption of marital duty or pleasure. I snored. I was banished to my study couch. Soon the spare bedroom was fitted with a bed and a wardrobe and a chest of drawers, and I lay awake long in it, listening for sounds of distress from the master room, working out the plots of three novels.

A novel is primarily an entertainment that should primarily entertain its author. I felt guilty each morning after breakfast when I mounted the stairs to my study, there to be entertained. I was juggling with words in the service of diversion while suffering I could not well understand proceeded with the housework below. The Germans, and especially Thomas Mann, use the term *Künstlerschuld*—artist's guilt—to designate the writer's

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gloom at his own frivolity in a world that performs dull useful work and is unhappy about it. My *Künstlerschuld* was highly personal: I had to force myself to temper it with the reflection that I was trying to earn a living. Lynne reminded me of this when she occasionally cried upstairs that she could not hear the clatter of the typewriter. She would not accept that writing is nine parts brooding and one part clattering. I finished *Inside Mr. Enderby* in late June. Enderby's comic failed suicide was an attempt to exorcise Lynne's uncomic one. I sent the typescript to Janson-Smith, keeping no copy for myself. I had never made copies, even in Malaya and Borneo. I had a naïve trust in the mails. Janson-Smith thought the book was too lavatory-obsessed to be easily publishable. I had better write something else.

I dug out the yellowing typescript of my old novel *The Worm and the Ring* and began to rewrite it. I tempered its heavy Catholic guilt with an attempt at humor. I finished it in a summer month and sent it to Janson-Smith. Janson-Smith then took it, along with *Inside Mr. Enderby,* to James Michie at Heinemann. He showed the lavatorial novel to him first. Michie neither accepted nor rejected it: he thought it might be publishable some day, though under a pseudonym. "What else do you have?" he asked. It was as if I were a brand name for mass-produced toilet articles. Janson-Smith gave him *The Worm and the Ring,* which was considered immediately publishable, meaning some time in 1961. Roland Gant, the senior editor of Heinemann, who had rejected the work in 1954, now thought highly of it. I was paid another advance suitable for the era of Ford Madox Ford and D.H. Lawrence.

When my half-yearly royalty statement arrived, I groaned at the apparent impossibility of earning a living as a novelist. My first novel, *Time for a Tiger,* had sold five thousand copies, and I had foolishly assumed that its sequels would do at least as well. But *The Enemy in the Blanket* had been suppressed because of a libel suit, and *Beds in the East* seemed, to the superficial reader, to offer

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nothing that *Time for a Tiger* had not already provided. The first book of the trilogy sold moderately well because it purveyed sad humor in an exotic setting: it was something of a novelty. It also informed, in the manner of heightened journalism, about the conditions of life in a far country rent by an ideological war. When book buyers buy books, they look for sex, violence and hard information. They get these from Arthur Hailey, whose characters discuss problems of hotel management while committing adultery before being beaten up. Readers interested in a novelist's Malaya got all they wanted from *Time for a Tiger.* The third book seemed supererogatory and it sold fewer than three thousand copies.

But as the whole world knew, there were some very rich novelists around. There was a category of both author and novel known as the bestseller, and there seemed even to be a formula for selling well, or best. There were even correspondence colleges which taught the formula, although one wondered why their professors, knowing it, were not loftily above having to teach it. I picked up at Heinemann's offices a bound page proof of Nevil Shute's new novel *Trustee from the Toolroom* and saw clearly enough why it had to be a bestseller. There was not much sex or violence in it, but it bulged with information, some of it of a highly technical kind. The characters were unambiguous, meaning that they hardly existed. Style as I knew it hardly existed either, and Nevil Shute, who had been a professional aeronautical engineer, publicly disclaimed style. I could see now that a literary education did not fit one for the popular novelist's trade. Once you started using words like flavicomous or acroamatic, because you liked the sound of them, you were lost. On the other hand, it was in order to write of fallaway sections and finiteamplitude waves, since their magic derived from the solid field of technology.

I had to accept that I was what I was, that my books, such as they were, were myself. The only way in which I could pay the mortgage installments and meet the

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tradesmen's bills was to offer to the reading public a great deal of what I was. So, with *The Worm and the Ring* and *Inside Mr. Enderby* delivered, I turned my verse play *The Eve of Saint Venus* into a novella. Heinemann did not want it. I then tried two novels at the same time—one, called *I Trust and Love You,* based on the fourth book of the Aeneid, in which the love affair of Dido and Aeneas was to be set forth in un-Vergilian amplitude; the other, called *Sealed with a Loving Kiss,* a retelling of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* a grim story of brother and sister incest. I wasted a month on those. I reread *Salammbô* to get information about ancient Carthage but I needed more than that. I could not, any more than Vergil, bring Aeneas to life. Converted into prose fiction, the John Ford plot seemed improbable. In despair I typed a new title—*A Clockwork Orange*—and wondered what story might match it. I had always liked the Cockney expression and felt there might be a meaning in it deeper than a bizarre metaphor of—not necessarily sexual—queerness. Then a story began to stir.

Lynne and I had come home to a new British phenomenon—the violence of teenage gangs. We had, on our leaves of 1957 and 1958, seen teddy boys in coffee bars. These were youths dressed very smartly in neo-Edwardian suits with heavy-soled boots and distinctive coiffures. They seemed too elegant to be greatly given to violence, but they were widely feared by the faint-hearted. They were a personification of the *Zeitgeist* in that they seemed to express a brutal disappointment with Britain's postwar decline as a world power and evoked the age of Edwardian expansion in their clothes if nothing else. They had originally been called Edwardian Strutters. They had been briefly influential even in Malaya, where national servicemen had worn the attire off-duty, and we had seen young Malays and Chinese sweating in heavy serge. Now, in 1960, they were being superseded by hooligans more casually dressed. The Mods and Rockers were so called because the first group wore modern clothes,

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whatever they were, and the others had motorcycles with rockers or parking prongs. The Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary is right in pointing to the leather jackets of the Rockers as a sartorial mark, but it is wrong in supposing that they got their name from a love of rock 'n' roll. Lynne and I saw Mods and Rockers knocking hell out of each other when we made a trip to Hastings.

These young people seemed to love aggression for its own sake. They were expressing the Manichaean principle of the universe, opposition, as an end in itself, *yin* versus *yang,* X against Y. I foresaw that the Queen's Peace was going to be greatly disrupted by the aimless energy of these new young, well-fed with money in their pockets. They were not, of course, all that new. The apprentices of Queen Elizabeth I's time used to riot, but they were dealt with in a very summary way—sometimes hanged on the spot. I at first thought of making my new novel a historical one, dealing with a particular apprentices' riot in the 1590s, when young thugs beat up the women who sold eggs and butter at prices considered too high, with perhaps William Shakespeare breaking his hip when slithering on a pavement greasy with blood and egg yolk. But I finally decided to be prophetic, positing a near future—1970, say—in which youthful aggression reached so frightful a pitch that the government would try to burn it out with Pavlovian techniques of negative reinforcement. I saw that the novel would have to have a metaphysical or theological base—youthful free will having the choice of good and evil although generally choosing evil; the artificial extirpation of free will through scientific conditioning; the question as to whether this might not, in theological terms, be a greater evil than the free choice of evil.

My problem in writing the novel was not one that would have worried Nevil Shute: it was wholly stylistic. The story had to be told by a young thug of the future, and it had to be told in his own version of English. This would be partly the slang of his group, partly his personal

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idiolect. It was pointless to write the book in the slang of the early sixties: it was ephemeral, like all slang, and might have a lavender smell by the time the manuscript got to the printers. It seemed, at the time, an insoluble problem. A slang for the 1970s would have to be invented, but I shrank from making it arbitrary. I shut the half-completed draft, whose sixties slang clearly would not do, in a drawer and got down to the writing of something else.

I read the fiction of others in bed and, during the day, tried to write a very difficult novel I was to call *The Wanting Seed.* The title came from a folksong which had, indifferently, wanton or wanting seed in its refrain. The seed was semen and the song was quietly erotic. My book was to be on a theme I had had long in mind—the population explosion. I had lived in the pullulating East and reread Thomas Malthus: indeed, I was to write a definitive study of him for a learned American journal. There would, some day, be too many mouths to feed. This was not apparent in the West, except on Oxford Street, and I was probably wrong to make a future England the setting of a novel about demographic disaster: Calcutta or Bombay would have been more appropriate. But this was hypothetical fiction, and it was in order to import starvation from Africa and statutory family planning from China. My England is implausibly overcrowded; the Greater London has expanded to the Channel. There are skyscraper flat-blocks in Brighton and even artificial islands on the sea for population overflow. The task of the three superpowers is to achieve, each in its own way, a balance between food production and population. The superpowers are called ENSPUN, RUSPUN and CHINSPUN (English, Russian and Chinese Speaking Unions), and these implement demographic control according to their own traditions. RUSPUN and CHINSPUN exact the death penalty for exceeding the limit of one child per family, but ENSPUN is liberal and pragmatic. In Britain homosexuality is officially encouraged ("It's Sapiens to be Homo"

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say the posters) and voluntary castrati (called Castros) earn the higher government appointments. There are mild punishments for philoprogenitiveness, but the democratic tradition of playing the game is upheld. Cricket has become the Sacred Game and is played, for lack of outdoor space, in the old cathedrals. Women play against men.

The cyclical principle of government is well understood: my hero, a schoolmaster, teaches it to his huge classes. There are three phases—the Augustinian, the Pelagian, and an intermediate one like Vico's *ricorso,* abbreviated to Gusphase, Pelphase and Interphase. The Gusphase, based on an acceptance of original sin, does not expect too much from the governed. When the governed behave rather better than could be expected, the notion of original sin is occluded and the Pelagian phase (which, like socialism, believes people to be fundamentally good) supervenes. Disappointed Pelagianism brings in governmental harshness and Draconian laws and the tyrannical Interphase is established. But not for long. Government shrugs at unregenerable man and the Gusphase returns. The cycle resumes and goes on forever. This playful theory of mine, perhaps not so playful, was meant to be an answer to Orwell.

Most of the narrative of *The Wanting Seed* is set in an Interphase. Food rations are being reduced and the population is growing restive. There are strikes and riots, and these are put down by a newly enlarged police force called, because of their uniforms, Interphase-coloured, the Greyboys. There is also a more sinister body called the Population Police, or Poppol, whose badge shows a broken egg. They check on illegal pregnancies or "illeg pregs" and haul the miscreants to jail and enforced abortion. But the people rise against this un-British brutishness and put their faith not in government but in God. God is a dirty word in the positivist state, and Augustus and Pelagius are purely secular myths. Priests, as agents of a superstition based on fecundity (*The Golden Bough* is

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known in a space-saving logographic form—*Dh Gldn Ban*), are functioning only underground. Now they climb out of their holes and publicly celebrate mass. The cannibalistic overtones of the Eucharist encourage genuine cannibalism: a child quite logically says: "If it's all right to eat God it must be all right to eat Jim Grimshaw." The police, mostly homosexuals, are the first to be eaten. With the return of public order, generated by private armies, a solution to the threat of world starvation is found in war. Nobody knows at first who the enemy is, but there are ES's or Extermination Sessions conducted in the wilder areas of the world, including Ireland. My hero, who is inducted into the forces against his will, and becomes a sergeant with my own military number, 7388026, discovers that men are fighting women and that the cadavers are being shipped for processing into canned meat. He also discovers two great truths: that man is part of nature, and if he will not breed neither will the animal and vegetable worlds; that everyone has a right to be born, but no one has a right to live. Finishing the novel, I saw that it was very Catholic.

Twenty-five years ago, when the novel was published, nobody was prepared to take seriously that anthropophagy might be a solution to world starvation, and that overpopulation might thus provide its own solvent. After the disclosure of the cannibalism that kept alive the survivors of the Andes air crash, there was rather less scoffing. Those survivors were well-nourished by the softer portions of their dead companions, though terribly constipated. Buying canned meat in supermarkets, we do not well know what the animal is, the flesh being smothered in additives. One of these days we may well buy *Munch* and discover that it is *Mensch.* There is nothing basically wrong with cannibalism. When, on a trip to New Guinea in my Malayan days, I was given a crisp piece of roasted meat by my primitive hosts, who had just got over the custom of feeding unwanted children to pigs, I only found out what it was after ingestion. I was naturally as

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sick as a dog, but that was only my culture getting in the way: my stomach was not prepared to object.

The Wanting Seed had little chance of becoming a best-seller. The struggle to earn went on, and it could not wholly be solved by selling review copies at half-price to Simmonds on the Strand.

Lynne and I felt that we ought to take a holiday. There were Russian ships sailing from Tilbury to Leningrad, calling at Copenhagen and Stockholm, and then sailing back, calling at Stockholm and Copenhagen with Helsinki added. There was a brief stay in a Leningrad hotel between voyages. The Russians were known to be good drinkers, and Lynne knew she would feel at home among them. When I had finished my day's stint of novelizing, reviewing, and assessing the exotic, I started to relearn Russian. I tried to persuade Lynne that she should at least learn the Cyrillic alphabet, so as to know where the ladies' toilets were, and to master a few sweeteners of social intercourse, such as *dobriy dyen* and *spasibo.* But she was above going back to school, unless she could take a time-trip to being once more head girl and outstanding athlete at Bedwellty. She watched *Emergency Ward 10* on television instead. Her lack of linguistic curiosity worried me, as also the assumption that it was a husband's duty to be a dragoman, as well as an earner, lover and protector. I wrote out TUALET large in Cyrillic but she gave it to our dog Haji to chew up, growling. I sighed and slogged away at my word lists and frequentative verbs, and soon it flashed upon me that I had found a solution to the stylistic problem of *A Clockwork Orange.* The vocabulary of my space-age hooligans could be a mixture of Russian and demotic English, seasoned with rhyming slang and the gipsy's bolo. The Russian suffix for -teen was *nadsat,* and that would be the name of the teenage dialect, spoken by *drugi* or droogs or friends in violence.

Russian loanwords fit better into English than those from German, French, or Italian. English, anyway, is already a kind of mélange of French and German. Rus-

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sian has polysyllables like *zhevotnoye* for beast, and *ostanovka avtobusa* is not so good as bus stop. But it also has brevities like *brat* for brother and *grud* for breast. The English "word," in which four consonants strangle one short vowel, is inept for that glorious smooth roundness. *Groodies* would be right. In the manner of Eastern languages, Russian makes no distinction between leg and foot—*noga* for both—or hand and arm, which are both *ruka.* This limitation would turn my horrible young narrator into a clockwork toy with inarticulated limbs. As there was much violence in the draft smouldering in my drawer, and would be even more in the finished work, the strange new lingo would act as a kind of mist half-hiding the mayhem and protecting the reader from his own baser instincts. And there was a fine irony in the notion of a teenage race untouched by politics, using totalitarian brutality as an end in itself, equipped with a dialect which drew on the two chief political languages of the age.

I ended up with a Russian loanword vocabulary of around two hundred words. As the book was about brainwashing, it was appropriate that the text itself should be a brainwashing device. The reader would be brainwashed into learning minimal Russian. The novel was to be an exercise in linguistic programming, with the exoticisms gradually clarified by context: I would resist to the limit any publisher's demand that a glossary be provided. A glossary would disrupt the program and nullify the brainwashing. It turned out to be a considerable pleasure to devise new rhythms and resurrect old ones, chiefly from the King James Bible, to accommodate the weird patois. The novel was nearly finished by the time we were ready to travel to Tilbury and board the *Alexander Radishchev,* a well-found ship of the Baltic Line.

In those days the habit of traveling with much luggage had not been modified by a shortage of railway porters. Lynne packed an evening gown and I a dinner jacket. We were thinking of the wrong Russia, or perhaps deter-

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mined to show capitalistically off in a worker's world of the ill-dressed. That Russians were ill-dressed and that there was a shortage of consumer goods we knew from the British newspapers.

Their shining ship mocked the run-down docks. A brassy song of Soviet triumph rang from the ship's loudspeakers as we boarded. We had tiered bunks in a cabin with a shower we shared with the neighboring cabin. Entering the shower-cell by opposed doors, naked I and a naked matron with steel wool pubic hair confronted each other. The shower would not work anyway. The visible ship's company were charming, mostly teachers of English who had been ordered into naval uniform—clean and well-cut—to improve their colloquial grasp of it. The food was disgusting, mostly tired stew with, as at some poor children's treat, an orange for afters. A dark man of unknown provenance in gaudy braces sat next to me, and his wife stood behind him. He did not seem to have met potatoes before. The food was so bad and so scanty that I divined a fiddle must be going on, as in all the mercantile marines of the world. I had seen the chief steward, who wore a London-cut dinner jacket even when supervising breakfast, counting a wad of pound notes—*odannadsat, duyenadsat, trinadsat*—in a dark companionway before the ship hooted off.

Lynne had learned one word that I had given her out of *A Clockwork Orange.* This was *horrorshow,* a folk-etymologizing of *khorosho,* the neuter form of the word meaning good. She mistook its meaning and applied it to the breakfast rice skilly and the fatty salami. The stewardesses, who wore head dresses straight from *Petrushka,* could not reconcile the praise with the frown. If one could not eat one could at least drink, and there were five bars open on a shift system throughout the *sutki*—a useful word meaning night and day seen as a unity. Lynne was taught the Russian way of downing vodka, the shot-glassful straight down the hatch, recommended as a specific against seasickness. The sugary Georgian wine in-

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duced a sickness of its own. Lynne took to her bunk with a rash caused by wood spirit, exhausted, and ate oranges which a sweet-faced young blonde stewardess machiolated or denticulated with a sharp knife in the manner of Swiss restaurants. This took time, of which the Russians seemed to have plenty. Lynne raged at long delays in answering the service bell and quarreled with a two-ringed steward. I had to take up the quarrel on her behalf, though unwillingly, and met a response of hopeless Russian resignation: it was hard to please people, the human soul exhibited its perverse intransigence even in small particulars. The ship seemed to be an extraterritorial state, not much touched by Soviet optimism. The dinner-jacketed chief steward thought little of Khrushchev and would perform gross imitations of him trying to seduce little girls. He thought highly of Harold Macmillan, Princess Margaret, and stockcar racing. He would down a half-liter bottle of vodka in one, eyes closed against the light like a gardener swigging cold tea.

Most of the passengers were groups under the control of Intourist. There were British trade-union officials who dined in their braces and saw themselves as pilgrims going to Mecca. One, who had no teeth and whose gums were like polished coral, kept saying, "Stands to reason you can get a good plate of fish and chips on Nevsky Prospect." He complained that the tea was pure gnat-piss and was rebuked by a serious young woman officer of stern loveliness whose patriotism seemed affronted. "Lass," he said, "I was a card-carrying member of t'Communist Party afore you was bloody well wiped." There were a lot of young people, students in the charge of their lecturers in sociology, who belonged to an organization known as the Sputnik Club. *Sputnik* meant for them a Soviet space module, but it really signified fellow-traveler. They were a fellowship of travelers who were going to be instructed in the Soviet dream. They were ordered about as on a troopship. "The Sputnik Club," the loudspeakers said in good Oxford tones, "will assem-

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ble at once in the cultural salon for the conference on Soviet science fiction."

Lynne got out of her bunk for this event and fortified herself for it with many shot glasses of vodka. "You are becoming a real Russian," admired a stewardess. Various Soviet science fiction specialists harangued the assembly on the glories of Soviet science fiction, but one complained humorously of the difficulty of screwing the imagination to the right inventive level when Soviet technology was so swift to overtake the fantastically fictional. Lynne cried out: "Why have you banned *Doctor Zhivago*?" The interpretress, a tall girl with frizzed ginger hair, answered that the question was impertinent but that it would nevertheless be answered. The answer was given truculently by a man of letters who looked like a boilermaker's union official. Pasternak had betrayed the October revolution in wretched prose and worse verse, had evaded the discipline of constructing characters according to the principles of Soviet realism and had opted for decadent Western complexity and ambiguity. Literature was there to affirm the values of the Soviet state and Pasternak affirmed decadent individual pseudo-values in the discredited bourgeois manner. And so on. This was very adequately translated. The Sputnik beatniks cheered. Lynne cried, rightly, "Bugger the state," and then fell off her chair. The Sputnik nogoodniks jeered. The holiday was going well.

In May 1962 *A Clockwork Orange* appeared. One anonymous summation in a trade paper was not a typical: "An off-beat and violent tale about teenage gangs in Britain, written in out-of-this-world gibberish." The *Times Literary Supplement* was more specific: "A viscous verbiage . . . which is the swag-bellied offspring of decay . . . English is being slowly killed by her practitioners." I was considered an accomplished writer who had set out deliberately to murder the language. It was comforting to remember that the same thing had been said about Joyce. My taste was questionable. "The author seems content to

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use a serious social challenge for frivolous purposes, but himself to stay neutral." Robert Taubman, in the *New Statesman,* said, "The book, written in a combination of Jacobean English and nadsat, is a great strain to read," adding: "There's not much fantasy here." No British reviewer liked it, but the producers of the BBC television program *Tonight* were interested enough to invite me to be interviewed by Derek Hart. They did more. They dramatized much of the first chapter of the book very effectively and made more of the language than the theme. I showed myself to be an adequate television performer. The BBC even paid a small fee, more than French or American television does, the view of both being that one should be delighted to publicize one's work for nothing.

In 1962 there was only one BBC television channel. Though most viewers preferred the offerings of the independent network, it was said that a good nine million people watched *Tonight.* I took the train from Charing Cross back to Etchingham in cautious elation. Surely at least one percent of those who had had this superficial exposure to *A Clockwork Orange* would buy the book. I would become moderately rich; I had had the accolade of a television appearance and would now be a sort of public personality. But the book sold badly, rather worse if anything than previous novels of mine. I learned the great lesson of the dangers of overexposure. Viewers had been told enough about the book to be able to discuss it at cocktail parties: the reading of it would be wearisome, as the press had already announced, as well as supererogatory. The British were, I considered, stuffy and desperately conservative. They did not want experimental fiction and they hated ideas. I began more and more to look to America.

A Clockwork Orange was published in New York by W.W. Norton later in the year. Eric Swenson, Norton's vice president, insisted that the book lose its final chapter. I had to accede to this lopping because I needed the

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advance, but I was not happy about it. I had structured the work with some care. It was divided into three sections of seven chapters each, the total figure being, in traditional arithmology, the symbol of human maturity. My young narrator, the music-loving thug Alex, ends the story by growing up and renouncing violence as a childish toy. This was the subject of the final chapter, and it was the capacity of this character to accept change which, in my view, made the work into a genuine if brief novel. But Swenson wanted only the reversible artificial change imposed by state conditioning. He wished Alex to be a figure in a fable, not a novel. Alex ends Chapter 20 saying: "I was cured all right," and he resumes joy in evil. The American and European editions of the novel are thus essentially different. The tough tradition of American popular fiction ousted what was termed British blandness.

Though they were reading a somewhat different book, American reviewers understood what I was trying to do rather better than their British counterparts. *Time* said:

> It may look like a nasty little shocker, but Burgess has written that rare thing in English letters—a philosophical novel. The point may be overlooked because the hero tells all in nadsat which serves to put him where he belongs—half in and half out of the human race. The pilgrim's progress of a beatnik Stavrogin is a serious and successful moral essay. Burgess argues quite simply that Alex is more of a man as an evil man than as a good zombie. The clockwork of a mechanical society can never counterfeit the organic vitality of moral choice. Goodness is nothing if evil is not accepted as a possibility.

Robert Gorham Davis in the *Hudson Review* said that the novel clearly turned Alex into an inarticulate apostle of

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existential or even Christian freedom and "by a perverse logic, images of violence are put at the service of a dreadful, dead-end concept of freedom." David Talbot in the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote: "Love cannot exist without the possibility of hate, and by forcing men to abdicate their right to choose one over the other, society turns men into automata. Thus Burgess points his stunning moral: In a clockwork society, human redemption will have to arise out of evil."

It was gratifying to be understood in America, humiliating to be misread in my own country. American critics forced me to take my own work seriously and to ponder whether the implied moral of the novel was sound. Brought up as a Catholic (and the book is more Catholic or Judaic than Protestant), I naturally considered that humanity is defined by its capacity for St. Augustine's *liberum arbitrium,* and that moral choice cannot exist without a moral polarity. I saw that the book might be dangerous because it presented good, or at least harmlessness, as remote and abstract, something for the adult future of my hero, while depicting violence in joyful dithyrambs. But violence had to be shown. If I had begun my story with Alex in the dock, condemned for crimes generalized into judicial rhetoric, even the gentlest spinster reader would rightly have complained about evasion. Fiction deals with the concrete and the particular, even in Henry James, and the sin of showing juvenile brutality was, for me, behoovely. But I was sickened by my own excitement at setting it down, and I saw that Auden was right in saying that the novelist must be filthy with the filthy.

I discussed this matter of the novelist's moral responsibility with George Dwyer in his Leeds bishopric. I was invited to a *Yorkshire Post* literary luncheon at which he said grace. George had written his master's thesis on Baudelaire and knew all about flowers of evil. Literature, even the kind celebrated at a literary luncheon, was an aspect of the fallen world and one of its tasks was to clarify the nature of the fall. Thoughtful readers of novels

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with criminal, or merely sinful, protagonists achieved catharsis through horror, setting themselves at a distance for their own sinful inheritance. As for thoughtless readers, there was no doing anything with them. With the demented, literature could prime acts of evil, but that was not the fault of literature. The Bible had inspired a New York killer to sacrifice children to a satanic Jehovah; the murderer Haig, who drank the blood of the women he slaughtered, was obsessed with the eucharist. The guest of honor at this literary luncheon was C.P. Snow, whose wife Pamela Hansford Johnson was to write a book about the Moors Murders. The child-killer Brady confessed to having possibly been moved by his reading of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine.* Lady Snow said that if the life of one innocent child could be saved through the obliteration of the world's literature, then we should not hesitate to set fire to it. That was very much a non-Catholic view. George Dwyer knew we had to live with the devil.

There was an attempt, in the middle sixties, to put *A Clockwork Orange* on the screen, with a singing group known as the Rolling Stones playing the violent quartet led by the hero Alex, a role to be given to Mick Jagger. I admired the intelligence, if not the art, of this young man and considered that he looked the quintessence of delinquency. The film rights of the book were sold for very little to a small production company headed by a Californian lawyer. If the film were to be made at all, it could only be in some economical form leasable to clubs: the times were not ripe for the screening of rape and continual mayhem before good family audiences. When the times did become ripe, the option was sold to Warner Brothers for a very large sum: I saw none of the profit. There had also been attempts to make a film of *The Wanting Seed,* and I had written several scripts for it. Scriptwriting can be a relief from the plod of fiction: it is nearly all dialogue, with the *récit* left to the camera. But it is a mandatory condition of scriptwriting that one script

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is never enough. There can sometimes be as many as twenty, with the twentieth usually a reversion to the first. In any event, scripts tend to change radically once they get on the studio floor.

I was summoned to Hollywood, or rather Burbank, to discuss the creation of a script on the life of William Shakespeare. My novel *Nothing Like the Sun* had at least been heard of in the film capital, and it was considered that I could produce something sensual and violent enough to be called *The Bawdy Bard.* I could not, however, adapt my own novel, as a theatrical option had been taken on it by a New York producer, and even to lift one of my own lines from novel to script would be rank plagiarism actionable at law. The madness of the show-business world was already beginning to impinge on my innocence. I had to think out an alternative Shakespeare, not too difficult in respect of somebody Coleridge called myriad-minded. The film was, moreover, to be a musical, a hard-ticket one like *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot.* Warner Brothers Seven Arts had done well with these adaptations of stage successes, but now a singing Shakespeare was to go straight to the screen, riding on a British glamour that had to yield the rest of the available profit before taste changed. The hard-ticket movie was one of the more pleasing innovations of the late sixties. Lasting at least four hours, with an intermission, it turned a visit to the cinema into a major occasion, like suffering *The Flying Dutchman.* It was solid entertainment, and the solidity was fancifully attached to the ticket one bought. There were non-musical hard-ticks, as they were called, like *Doctor Zhivago* and *Lawrence of Arabia.* These had in common British actors and a British scenarist. Though *Doctor Zhivago* was about Russia, it was a Russia with British accents. What could be more British-accented than a musical life of Shakespeare? I forbore to say that the real Shakespeare spoke like an Irish Bostonian.

I traveled in great luxury to Los Angeles and was met

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at the airport by a film star who had just turned producer. This was William Conrad, unknown to me although he had made a name in the Hemingway film *The Killers.* He was a bulky man from Kentucky with a Genghis Khan look. This Shakespeare venture was his own idea, his first attempt at a major production and, it proved, his last. He was to become famous as a television performer in a series about a private eye named Cannon, and then in another series about the Rex Stout character Nero Wolfe. He was a true actor in that he knew Shakespeare, which was more than most film stars did, and when he quoted, "Like Niobe, all tears," tears welled briefly into his handsome dark eyes. Though I had been seen off from Heathrow by an Egyptian functionary of the Warner Brothers London office, I did not yet have the cachet that entitled me to a suite at the Beverly Wilshire, so I was put up in the Manhattan Hotel opposite Grauman's Chinese Theater. There I dined on fat lamb and stewed tomatoes, which rhymed with theaters. I could not, of course, sleep, but television all night long flashed its used-car commercials. I did not dare walk the night streets, since roving police cars mistrusted all pedestrians, especially those with foreign accents. "This ain't Piccadilly Square, my friend." Even strolling the dawn streets was dangerous, for the invisible knives of Los Angeles smog tore at the lungs.

The Warner estate at Burbank was dominated by the Arthurian castle built for *Camelot,* which a superstitious devotion to profitable British mythology forbade to be torn down. Rank Californian grass aped British lawns perpetually watered. I expected to be installed at once in the Writers' Building, but those days were over. I was here only to discuss the content of the script and then go home to write it, or rather a ten-page treatment together with the lyrics of the songs. Bill Conrad had a palace of an office with bathroom and well-stocked bar. His secretary, Katie, had been vetted by Bill's wife, a beauty given to horoscopes and astral bodies; she was found satisfactorily plain and even old, having worked for British films

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in the ancient Nova Pilbeam days. She said "All righty" much of the time. She had already typed and Xeroxed Bill's plan for the film, which was based on outmoded Shakespearean lore like the Charlcote deer-poaching and the holding of horses outside the Curtain playhouse. I had nothing much against this: the aim was entertainment not exact scholarship. For that matter I had nothing against a singing Shakespeare, being only too pleased that anyone should want to put the man Shakespeare on the screen at all. Some sound theatrical instinct was telling Bill that we were into a phase of popular music closer to the Elizabethan idiom than, say, the songs of Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate.* The groups that twanged guitars found modal progressions like C major–D major–E major easier than the old tonic and dominant. We were hearing a lot of Dorian and Mixolydian on the radio. Bill annoyed me only when he tried to improvise a song that began, "To be or not to be in love with you, / To spend my life being hand in glove with you."

If there was British glamour briefly around, there was also a sort of black or Negro renascence which I thought justified making Shakespeare's dark lady into an unequivocal African in a farthingale. I wanted Diana Ross being bussed hungrily on her fair black shoulders while she played John Bull on the virginals. But Bill was a man of Kentucky and demurred. He was at that time discreetly supervising an all-black film being shot by a black man who would have nothing white in it except money. The black man called himself producer and director besides scenarist and originator of concept, composer as well, since his monody was to be heard on a harmonica, presumably played by himself. It was not a good film, since its maker was deficient in all the necessary talents, but it was undeniably, though in color, a black film. If it did not succeed, that would be the mysterious fault of Whitey or the Man or Mr. Charley. Bill was quietly and Kentuckianly shocked at the idea of Shakespeare, a very superior WASP, in thrall to a really dark lady: like Dr. A.L. Rowse, he would be satisfied with a Sicilian. We argued

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about this over a commissary salad, Bill being greeted occasionally with the "Hi's" of stars and starlets who were pallid and shrunken. The age of the homegrown giants was over, and the Robert Redfords and Faye Dunaways were only just coming in. The British, with their strong stage tradition and flourishing television drama, were dominant, though also a pain in the ass, what with either their Julie Andrews prissiness or their Peter O'Toole hellraking. The militant blacks were a pain in the ass too, but one did not dare say that.

The major trouble with the devising of a plot for the Shakespeare film, which I now insisted be called *Will!* and not *The Bawdy Bard,* was that it did not seem to have any clear motivation according to the Hollywood prescription. It was just about a Stratford lad making it in the big time and getting laid by a black bitch. Of course, there was the Essex rebellion and the desertion of his wife and the death of his son Hamnet, but how could these be merged into a single theme you could write on the back of a four-cent postage stamp? A functionary was brought in who, I supposed, had to exist, though his office did not seem to be credible—the motivation man from the script department. He was very fierce about motivation: a movie was like a locomotive, running on predestinate rails to a depot on whose platform all the luggage of past action was deposited: everything had to tie up with everything else, even if historical truth was violated. This was probably sound, even Shakespearean. The motivation man was impatient with the deficiencies of past time and thought that Shakespeare in London could get news of his dying son in Stratford by Western Union or its archaic equivalent. He ended up with a grenade he hurled across Bill's huge office—guilt. It was all about guilt. Poor Will was a guilty man. Rub in the guilt and you had your motivation, though it made what was to be a musical entertainment kinda tragic. Having dealt us the gift of guilt he went on his way, to throw other one-word grenades at other script conferences.

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Apart from a plot problem there was a structural problem. A hard-ticket movie fell, like a paranged coconut, into two halves, but Shakespeare's career insisted on dividing itself by three—segment one ending with the young Will fleeing from Stratford and Lousy Lucy law while the beacons of victory over the Armada flared on the back-projected hills, segment two ending with the death of Queen Elizabeth and Will at the peak of gentlemanly prosperity and guilt, segment three bringing in James I, witchcraft, *Macbeth,* the traduction of Will's daughter Susanna for being naught with Ralph Smith, Anne Shakespeare's admission of adultery with Will's brother Richard, all Will's fault for whoring around in London, Will's gloomy drinking bout with Ben Jonson (leave Michael Drayton out of it), pneumonia, death. Not a very inspiriting finale, but at least the credits could roll over a gentleman's coat of arms, *Non Sanz Droit,* and very defiant music. I had better go home and work it all out on paper.

Bill gave a farewell party for me at his mansion in Bel Air, its number, in the Los Angeles manner, astronomical, fifteen thousand and something. Bill was one of those music-lovers who seemed to believe that surrounding himself with musical instruments would osmotically also make him a musician. There was a piano in his office, and in his house a three-manual organ and an Erard harp, though with nobody to play them. I had always wanted to try out the glissandi at the beginning of *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune,* and I spent too much time unsociably learning how to tune the harp pedals. But there were no great star guests to defer to—only Joe E. Brown's former agent, the Miss America of 1949, and one or two dithering shelved bit-players. I warmed to Bill, who made his friends out of has-beens and film technicians and despised the egomaniacal big names, what there were of them before *Easy Rider* and *Midnight Cowboy.* He was hospitable with his two-stone turkey and fixings and his desire that I be laid before flying home. The quondam Miss

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America was a suitable lay for one of my age, but I was not in the laying mood. So we all played word games till the smoggy dawn rose over the Californian hills. Then I flew back to London in great luxury and traveled by stopping train to Etchingham in rather less.

Lynne was remarkably well, so much so that I ought to have been frightened. Her eyes were sharply blue, her complexion was rosy, the ascites looked like mere matronly roundness. She had not been drinking much—a little gin, well-iced, the odd pint of cider from the kitchen barrel. Relieved but vaguely disturbed, I got down to the making of a film treatment and the composition of twenty song lyrics. Writing the lyrics, I thought I might as well write the music too, in short score with hints as to orchestration (shawns, sackbuts, a chest of recorders, tabors). The Queen's Men arrived in Stratford with Dick Tarleton and Will Kemp and sang who they were:

> The Queen's Men,
> The Queen's Men,
> Not beer-and-bread-and-beans men
> But fine men,
> Wine men,
> Music-while-we-dine men.

Shakespeare's father sang a song about loving life, and the Mayers chorused about bringing the maypole home (though perhaps Mayers might be the property of MGM). Anne Hathaway warned Will against ambition:

> Will-o'-the-wisp; do not desire
> To follow fame, that foolish fire.
> Better by far
> The fire at home—
> Fresh dawn on waking
> And fresh bread baking.
> A will-o'-the-wisp should not aspire
> To be a star.

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Will sang to little Hamnet in the Stratford snow, with a counterpointed Christmas carol (Bill Conrad had insisted on Christmas; he was a sucker for Christmas, he said):

> Little son,
> When I look on thee
> I am filled with wonder
> Such wonder can be—
> Part of me, yet no part of me,
> Wholly good, yet the wood of my tree.

Ghastly, I see now, diminishing the theme and the characters, yet it was the sort of thing that was wanted. There had been talk in Burbank of commissioning the Beatles to write the score, but I feared their idiom. The truth was that only Shakespeare could write the lyrics and John Dowland the music. But, as the drama of the treatment developed, the irrelevance of song became all too clear. Plenty of singing in rural Stratford but not much occasion for it when Essex was executed or Will, if the Hays Office or the Catholic League of Decency allowed, handled his hard chancre. You could hardly enclose the man Shakespeare in grand opera even. What was needed was a wholly serious non-musical hard-tick that told as much of the truth as we knew and aimed to lose money. This would never be made.

We often assume that organizations which make money are officered by men of wisdom, cultivation and plain common sense. I began to hear a distant warning voice telling me of the madness of involving myself in the cinema. This voice sounded louder when I was called to London to meet a distinguished American producer who wanted to make a film of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.* I remembered that Huxley himself had once wished to make a Broadway musical out of it, and might have done so had Leonard Bernstein not been too busy to collaborate. That would have been a diminution of a serious and prophetic work, but not so profound as the

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one that was now proposed to me in a London hotel suite. For, the producer said, the brave new world Huxley dreamed up was really this present British one, with all those chicks in miniskirts. Cut out all the Huxley crap of producing kids in test tubes and get down to presenting the final solution of a world of flower children and rock and miniskirts and all these kids having a great time screwing. The producer had found out that I was writing *The Bawdy Bard,* a great title, and assumed I would have a delicate hand at showing endless screwing. There was no point in my protesting that *Brave New World* was about the importance of free will and the degradation of conditioned happiness. Crap, the producer said, we all got to be conditioned, this guy B.F. Skinner says so, a professor some place, so there'll be no war and a world made free for ripping off miniskirts and screwing. I had to decline the commission he offered. He was disappointed, saying that I was evading the responsibility of putting Huxley right and showing a courageous new world of chicks having their miniskirts screwed off. This producer was older than I, but he had taken a rejuvenation course in a Swiss clinic.

I returned to sad Will and the completion of the treatment and the songs. They were sent off and, as in a libel suit, the project settled into a long sleep. Lynne and I left Etchingham with Haji and the cats and took breath for a vigorous season in London. For the management of the Phoenix Theatre was to present my *The Eve of Saint Venus* as the stage comedy it originally was, and there was talk of filming not merely *A Clockwork Orange* but a great deal of my work. A clothing store tycoon in America, movie-struck since he was a kid, was establishing a production company. He had read all the books I had written and found them cinematic, even the brief study of James Joyce. He would begin by setting up *A Clockwork Orange,* which the age of screwing and miniskirts was at last rendering acceptable for the screen, frontal nudity, rape and all, and he had his eye on various directors who would

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help me to write a script which should not reproduce the book too exactly. This was an aspect of film-making which bewildered me, the unwillingness to stick to the book. My four delinquents were variously to be turned into miniskirted girls and violent old age pensioners. The serious music crap was to be eliminated and hard rock substituted.

I was learning a great deal about the film industry, though not quite enough. One thing I was slow to learn was the importance of having something vaguely creative on paper which could be brandished in the hard faces of film financiers. An independent producer would prefer to have a first draft screenplay to wave, but scripts cost money. If he could get a treatment for nothing he considered that he was in business. There was an independent producer around who wanted to persuade MGM to back a hardticket film of *The Canterbury Tales.* He gave me an elaborate lunch with much cognac after and begged me to write him a long letter outlining a possible treatment. I approved of the project and still do, cursing Pasolini's homosexual travesty of Chaucer, and gladly wrote ten pages of single spacing, suggesting among other things that "The Nun's Priest's Tale" be done as an animated mediaeval cartoon. My enthusiasm was, as most enthusiasms are, unbusinesslike. My letter was really a ten thousand dollar treatment given for nothing. I have been more careful since, though not careful enough. Anyway, MGM disapproved of Chaucer, some old Shakespeare-type guy who garbled God's plain English. The films actually made are an iceberg tip. The cinema seethes with unrealized projects.

This was not only a season of mostly aborted show business—*The Eve of Saint Venus* was never produced in the West End; a musical version of Nevil Coghill's translation of *The Canterbury Tales* seemed likely to run for ever at the Phoenix, giving the lie to MGM scepticism. Only *A Clockwork Orange* was filmed.

It was in the early spring of 1970 that I learned the

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American director Stanley Kubrick was to make the film. I did not altogether believe this and I did not much care: there would be no money in it for me, since the production company that had originally bought the rights for a few hundred dollars did not consider that I had a claim to part of their own profit when they sold those rights to Warner Brothers. That profit was, of course, considerable.

Stanley Kubrick soon began sending urgent cables about the need to see me in London on some matter of the script—and I feared, justly as it turned out, that there would be frontal nudity and overt rape. In Chapel Hill I had seen Scandinavian pornography freely on show, and some of the films of the new American wave considered themselves antiquated and reactionary if they did not use "fuck" and show fucking. I foresaw a dangerous situation for myself and I was right to do so.

In the autumn of 1971 I was ordered by Warner Brothers to go to London, there to stay at Claridge's, and be ready for a private showing of Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange.*

I knew Kubrick's work well and admired it. *Paths of Glory,* not at that time admissible in France, was a laconic metaphor of the barbarity of war, with the French showing more barbarity than the Germans. *Dr. Strangelove* was very acerbic satire on the nuclear destruction we were all awaiting. Kubrick caught in a kind of one-act play, trimmed with shots of mushroom clouds, the masochistic reality of dreading a thing while secretly longing for it. I felt, though, that he over-valued the talent of Peter Sellers and made the *tour de force* of his playing three very different parts in the same film obscure the satire by compelling technical admiration. *Lolita* could not work well, not solely because James Mason and Sellers were miscast, but because Kubrick had found no cinematic equivalent to Nabokov's literary extravagance. Nabokov's script, I knew, had been rejected; all the scripts for

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A Clockwork Orange, above all my own, had been rejected too, and I feared that the cutting to the narrative bone which harmed the filmed *Lolita* would turn the filmed *A Clockwork Orange* into a complementary pornograph—the seduction of a minor for the one, for the other brutal mayhem. The writer's aim in both books had been to put language, not sex or violence, into the foreground; a film, on the other hand, was not made out of words.

At the screening I watched the film to the end, but it was not the end of the book I had published in London in 1962: Kubrick had followed the American truncation and finished with a brilliantly realized fantasy drawn from the ultimate chapter of the one, penultimate chapter of the other. Alex, the thug-hero, having been conditioned to hate violence, is now deconditioned and sees himself wrestling with a naked girl while a crowd dressed for Ascot discreetly applauds. Alex's voice-over gloats, "I was cured all right." A vindication of free will had become an exaltation of the urge to sin. I was worried. The British version of the book shows Alex growing up and putting violence by as a childish toy; Kubrick confessed that he did not know this version: an American, though settled in England, he had followed the only version that Americans were permitted to know. I cursed Eric Swenson of W.W. Norton.

The film was now shown to the public and was regarded by the reactionary as the more dangerous for being so brilliant. Its brilliance nobody could deny, and some of the brilliance was a film director's response to the wordplay of the novel. The camera played, slowing down, speeding up; when Alex hurled himself out of a window a camera enacted his attempted suicide by being itself hurled—a thousand-pound machine ruined at one throw. As for the terrible theme—the violence of the individual preferable to the violence of the state—questions were asked in parliament and the banning of the film urged. It was left to me, while the fulfilled artist Kubrick pared his nails in his house at Borehamwood, to

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explain to the press what the film, and for that matter the almost forgotten book, was really about, to preach a little sermon about *liberum arbitrium,* and to affirm the Catholic content. The Catholic press was not pleased. I told the *Evening Standard* that the germ of the book was the fourfold attack on my first wife by American deserters, and this was summarized on news-venders' posters as CLOCKWORK ORANGE GANG ATTACKED MY WIFE. Maurice Edelman, M.P., my old friend, attacked the film in the same newspaper and I had to telephone through a reply. I was not quite sure what I was defending—the book that had been called "a nasty little shocker" or the film about which Kubrick remained silent. I realized, not for the first time, how little impact even a shocking book can make in comparison with a film. Kubrick's achievement swallowed mine whole, and yet I was responsible for what some called its malign influence on the young.

I stopped off in London on my way back to Rome. I had to deliver the two plaques confirming that the New York Critics considered Stanley Kubrick the best director and scriptwriter of the year. I also had to appear on a BBC radio program to defend Stanley Kubrick's art and the apparent depravity of a book that few had read. This program was one of a series put out on the most demotic of the BBC's channels, in which discussion on serious topics with a live audience was justified with breaks for pop music. The seriousness was thus mitigated and the final effect was cynical. The anchorman of the program was a former disc jockey named Jimmy Savile. He had been noted for bipartite hair dyes and his love of the young. He had boasted of the "quids" he had earned in his promotion of musical garbage, but he had the reputation also of a philanthropist who used the media—newspaper, radio, television—to help the suffering, unite the sundered, and be admitted to the Order of the British Empire. His name now never appeared without the O.B.E. appendage. He was taken, with hair decently gray-

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ing, clad in an orthodox suit, not a disc jockey's motley, to be the finest type of Yorkshireman and paid to promote the virtues of British Rail.

The attacks on the film of *A Clockwork Orange* were bitter. One member of the audience cited the Poughkeepsie rape of a nun, ignoring the disclaimer that the film could have no influence on the ravishers. I stuck to one point—that the events of real life are anterior, naturally, to their representation in book or film, and that neither cinema nor literature can be blamed for the manifestations of original sin. A man who kills his uncle cannot justifiably blame a performance of *Hamlet.* On the other hand, if literature is to be held responsible for mayhem and murder, then the most damnable book of them all is the Bible, the most vindictive piece of literature in existence. The audience was not convinced. Savile maintained the right objectivity, but he ended the session by asking a man in the audience to stand up. This man admitted he had served a long jail sentence for Grievous Bodily Harm. He was asked by Savile if his reading had influenced his criminal behavior. Without doubt, the man replied, and the program came to an end.

This weighing of what was meant to be a free discussion with a dramatic conclusion that confirmed the prejudice of so many made me boil and wish to inflict "G.B.H." on Savile. I was also sickened by the manner in which a book that, all of ten years before, had made very little impact on the reading public was now becoming a kind of invisible primer of evil. It was not to be invisible for long. Deborah Rogers sold the paperback rights to Penguin, and a reproduction of the American edition soon appeared on the market, with the final, regenerative, chapter omitted and a stupid glossary of the nadsat slang added. Kubrick filed the nails of the other hand in Borehamwood and left me to be the target of vile accusation. It was clear that I would never be awarded an OBE.

When a writer writes about other writers it is a sign of a loss of creative vitality or else an evasion of the genera-

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tion of it. I wrote about Keats and Belli, which was perhaps an inventive venture enough. I wrote about Ernest Hemingway. I wrote about George Orwell. I wrote, for the Milan publishing house of Tramontana, a two-volume history of English literature—twelve hundred pages in all. It was called *Scrissero in Inglese*—"They Wrote in English." The sheer bulk seemed to excuse my producing a bulky novel.

When my little Hemingway book came out, I was asked to write and appear in a sixty-minute film for television called *Grace Under Pressure.* This was to deal with Hemingway's life, work and death and to attempt an assessment of his achievement. It was also to try to explain why he killed himself. The London Weekend Television team, with Tony Cash as director and myself as performer, flew to Chicago, picked up two station wagons, loaded them with uncountable metal boxes, unloaded them at a Holiday Inn, and then were told there were no vacancies. It was that kind of trip: meticulous booking at the London end met no counterpart at the Midwest end. Hotels had ceased to take letters seriously. Delayed by a storm when flying from Salt Lake City to Kansas City, we arrived at the booked hotel after six in the evening to be told that our rooms had been cancelled. We were reluctantly and belatedly accommodated for an extra charge, and I was given a room with television but no bed. I did not complain until we checked out: then I granted myself the luxury of a tirade. It was more self-pity than genuine anger. There had been a time when America knew me as a writer; it did not take long to be forgotten. And here I was bowing down to Hemingway, the author of two good novels but a bad man. I could not forgive him for his treatment of Ford Madox Ford, the greatest British novelist of the century. In the humid house in Key West where Hemingway had lived, I was asked by a curator to marvel at the miracle of superlative fiction being produced by two typing fingers: there, see, was the Hemingway machine. In Salt

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Lake City I telephoned Professor Geoffrey Aggeler, a Catholic at a Mormon university. He, who had published a book on me, might restore my faith in myself. But he thought the telephone call was a hoax: what would I be doing in Salt Lake City?

Between that paragraph and this I saw the Hemingway film again. It is good television and good biography. It discloses little of the extreme depression I was suffering. There was a moment of pathological self-abasement which the camera did not record. Outside the Kansas City hospital where Hemingway first became fascinated by castration (it comes in the early story "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and is given fuller treatment in *The Sun Also Rises*) there is a citation from Shakespeare: "The quality of mercy is not strained." I kept referring to Hemingway as Shakespeare until, in take ten, I got things right. That elevation of a good novelist into the world's greatest poet signified how low on the literary scale I considered myself to be. Shivering at the graveside in Idaho, I tried to explain why Hemingway shot himself in that house over there (from whose windows Mary Hemingway was watching us). He had reached a plateau of achievement and could not move. He was paralyzed and might as well be dead. I was sixty-one, Hemingway's own age when he put the gun in his mouth, and I knew what it was like not to be able to write. But one advantage of not being Hemingway was that I was not big enough to be a public character who, to impose a melodramatic end on a failed life, had to be his own big game. There was humble work to do—making a film on Hemingway, for instance—and a living could be earned. But I wanted to write a masterpiece and did not have the courage to do it.

Am I happy? Probably not. Having passed the prescribed biblical age limit, I have to think of death, and I do not like the thought. There is a vestigial fear of hell, and even of purgatory, and no amount of rereading

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rationalist authors can expunge it. If there is only darkness after death, then that darkness is the ultimate reality and that love of life which I intermittently possess is no preparation for it. In face of the approaching blackness, which Winston Churchill facetiously termed black velvet, concerning oneself with a world that is soon to fade out like a television image in a power cut seems mere frivolity. But rage against the dying of the light is only human, especially when there are things still to be done, and my rage sometimes sounds to myself like madness. It is not only a question of works never to be written, it is a matter of things unlearned. I have started to learn Japanese, but it is too late; I have started to read Hebrew, but my eyes will not take in the jots and titles. How can one fade out in peace, carrying vast ignorance into a state of total ignorance?

The rage I wake to and take to bed is a turbulence not always related to an object. It seems like a pure emotion looking for an object. It cathartizes itself into salty howling, then exhaustion, then it starts again. I remember in South Lancashire in my youth meeting an old woman who had just lost her husband. She said, "I've been crying all morning, and as soon as I've finished this treacle pudding I'll get back to it." There is always the danger of enjoying the tears or the rage, making a kind of prolonged orgasm out of frustration. Sometimes I fasten hopeless tears on to three images. One is of a small knock-kneed schoolboy, stockings falling down, satchel unhandily strapped to back, late for school, running to school and whimpering because he knows he will be punished. Who is the boy? It may be myself. One is of something I merely heard about. An owl screamed in misery because its egg had shattered: Some rodenticide or other had rendered the shells thin as paper. The third I saw in Kota Bharu: a large beetle lay dead; on its back there seemed to be a painted mask intended to frighten its enemies. There is a poem by Coventry Patmore in which a widowed father strikes his son and sends him to

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bed; then in remorse he visits the sleeping child, his cheeks still wet from sobbing, and weeps himself because the boy has placed his toys on his bedside table in an effort—"ranged there with careful art to comfort his sad heart"—to make order out of a life temporarily ruined. I cry at that poem. I cry at any attempt to sustain life through the feeble accumulation of things. *Sunt lachrymae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* Newman spoke of Vergil "as of a prophet or a magician; his single words and phrases, his pathetic half lines, giving utterance as the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the experience of her children in every time." I do not doubt that Robert Burns wept over the mouse and its wee bit housie in ruins. One's frustration at impotence to put the world right, expressed in rage, one's shame at the hopeless tears one starts to enjoy—these make the prospect of death a little easier.

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XII:

[redacted]10 WOLFE

fool enough to stand around in the asphalt mush of downtown at noon watching a parade was obviously defective to begin with. The parade plowed on, however, through wave after wave of catatonia and rippling lassitude.

After about an hour of this the fellows [redacted] and [redacted] their families noticed with considerable misgiving that the parade was heading back into that hole in the ground underneath the [redacted] Coliseum. [redacted] The air conditioning hit them like a wall. Everybody's bone marrow congealed. It made you feel like your teeth were loose. It turned out that this was where the little cocktail party was going to take place: in the Houston Coliseum. They led them up to the floor of the coliseum, which was like a great indoor bowl. There were thousands of people milling around, and some sort of incredible smell and a [redacted] storm of voices and occasional insane cackles. There were five thousand extremely loud people on the floor eager to tear into roast cow with both hands [redacted] it

Although marked "XII," this is actually a manuscript page from chapter XIII of The Right Stuff, *by Tom Wolfe.*

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Tom Wolfe

The Art of Fiction CXXIII

One of Tom Wolfe's favorite restaurants in New York City is the Isle of Capri on the East Side, specializing, as one might expect, in Italian cuisine; indeed, the menu does not condescend to non-Italian speaking customers: an extensive list of choices is not identified in English. The table set aside for Wolfe is in a corner of a patio-like glassed-in enclosure facing Third Avenue. Clusters of potted plants hang from its rafters. The author arrived wearing the white ensemble he is noted for—a white modified homburg, a chalk-white overcoat—but to the surprise of regular customers looking up from their tables, he removed the

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coat to disclose a light-brown suit set off by a pale lilac tie. Questioned about the light-brown suit, he replied: "Shows that I'm versatile." He went on to point out that his overcoat only had one button—rare in overcoats, quite impractical, obviously, in a stiff wind. "One must occasionally suffer for style." At the table he ordered bottled water and calamari. Squid. His accent is more cosmopolitan than southern though he grew up in the South (Richmond, Virginia) and went to school there (Washington and Lee). His face is pale, fine-featured. During the interview a young woman nervously approached the table for an autograph. She announced that she hoped to become a writer and that he had been her idol from the first. Wolfe thanked her and asked where she was from. North Carolina. While he worked the pen across the paper (Wolfe's autograph is a decorative scrawl which if stretched out straight would measure a foot.) the two chatted about her home state, which he knows well—his mother and sister live there. The young woman went on to say that she found New York City wonderful and looked forward to moving. Wolfe nodded, and afterwards remarked how pleasing it was to hear from someone not swayed by the bad publicity, least of all by reading his novel, The Bonfire of the Vanities.

Some particulars: Wolfe received his doctorate in American Studies from Yale University—his dissertation on an organization called the League of American Writers. He worked as a reporter for the Springfield *(Massachusetts)* Union, *the* Washington Post, *and the* New York Herald Tribune. *Magazine pieces appeared in* Rolling Stone, New York *magazine,* Esquire, *and* Harper's. *In 1965* The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby *was published; three years later* The Pump House Gang *and* The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test *appeared simultaneously. In 1975,* The Painted Word, *Wolfe's controversial look at the world of modern art, was published. His book about the early astronauts,* The Right Stuff, *won the American Book Award for general non-fiction.* From Bauhaus to Our House *was his critical look at contemporary architecture.* The Bonfire of the Vanities, *his only novel to date, was published in 1987 to considerable critical acclaim—the nation's top bestseller, both in hard-*

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cover and paperback, for many weeks. Wolfe lives in New York City with his wife, son, and ten-year-old daughter. Part of the interview which follows was conducted before the public under the auspices of the West Side YMCA in Manhattan.

INTERVIEWER

When did you first realize that you had a knack for writing?

TOM WOLFE

Very early. When I was six or seven years old. My father was the editor of an agricultural magazine called *The Southern Planter.* He didn't think of himself as a writer. He was a scientist, an agronomist, but I thought of him as a writer because I'd seen him working at his desk. I just assumed that I was going to do that, that I was going to be a writer. There's an enormous advantage in having (mistakenly or not) the impression that you have a vocation very early because from that time forward you begin to focus all of your energies towards this goal. The only other thing I ever considered from six on was to become an artist, something my mother had encouraged me to do.

INTERVIEWER

Regarding writing, was there any particular book which influenced you?

WOLFE

I was greatly struck by Emil Ludwig's biography of Napoleon, which is written in the historical present. It begins as the mother sits suckling her babe in a tent.

INTERVIEWER

And that impressed you?

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WOLFE

It impressed me so enormously that I began to write the biography of Napoleon myself, though heavily cribbed from Emil Ludwig. I was eight at the time.

INTERVIEWER

Did it start the same way, with a babe being suckled in . . .

WOLFE

It did, though no one would tell me what "suckled" meant. I only knew that that was what Napoleon did at the start. I always liked Napoleon from when I was six on because he was small and had ruled the world and at the time I was small. I liked Mozart for the same reason.

INTERVIEWER

What about Thomas Wolfe? Did he float into your consciousness at all?

WOLFE

Yes, he did. I can remember that on the shelves at home there were these books by Thomas Wolfe. *Look Homeward Angel* and *Of Time and the River. Of Time and the River* had just come out when I was aware of his name. My parents had a hard time convincing me that he was no kin whatsoever. My attitude was, "Well, what's he doing on the shelf then?" But as soon as I was old enough I became a tremendous fan of Thomas Wolfe and remain so to this day. I ignore his fluctuations on the literary stock market.

INTERVIEWER

You started off writing for newspapers. . . .

WOLFE

The first newspaper I worked on was the *Springfield Union* in Springfield, Massachusetts. I wrote over a hun-

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dred letters to newspapers asking for work and got three responses, two no's.

INTERVIEWER

Style is pretty much dictated in newspaper work, isn't it? Can you say something about the development of your style, which is certainly one of the more unique in American letters?

WOLFE

The newspaper is, in fact, very bad for one's prose style. That's why I gravitated towards feature stories where you get a little more leeway in the writing style. When I started writing magazine pieces for *Esquire* I had to unlearn newspaper restraints and shortcuts. Working on newspapers, you're writing to a certain length, often very brief pieces; you tend to look for easy forms of humor: "Women can't drive," things like that. That's about the level of a lot of newspaper humor. It becomes a form of laziness. But I wouldn't give anything for the years I spent on newspapers because it forces you, it immerses you, in so many different sides of life. I did try to cut up as much as I could; I think I was a lively newspaper writer, but that's a long way from being a good writer.

INTERVIEWER

Did editors tend to say, "Come now, you can't do this sort of thing?"

WOLFE

Yes, if the subject was serious. The greatest promotion I ever had on a newspaper was when the *Washington Post* suddenly promoted me from cityside general assignment reporter to Latin-American correspondent and sent me off to Cuba. Fidel Castro had just come to power. It was a very exciting assignment, but also very serious. Every time I tried to write about the veins popping out on the

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forehead of a Cuban revolutionary leader it was just stricken from the copy because all they wanted was, "Defense Minister Raul Castro said yesterday that . . . "

INTERVIEWER

When did the breakthrough come?

WOLFE

Well, this happened really in two stages. While I was in graduate school at Yale I came upon a group of early Soviet writers called the Brothers Serapion. These were people like Boris Pilnyak who wrote a book called *The Naked Year,* and especially Eugene Zamiatin, probably best known for his novel *We,* upon which George Orwell's *1984* is based. He is a brilliant writer who was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1927, I believe. These were Russian writers writing about the Soviet revolution; they were heavily influenced by French Symbolism, so you had all the preciousness and aestheticism of the Symbolists converging upon a very raw subject, namely the Revolution. I began imitating the Brothers Serapion in the short pieces I was writing for myself. I even tried to sneak these things into my newspaper work. I never got very far with it.

INTERVIEWER

What sort of thing?

WOLFE

For example, one of the things they did was experiment with punctuation. In *We,* Zamiatin constantly breaks off a thought in mid-sentence with a dash. He's trying to imitate the habits of actual thought, assuming, quite correctly, that we don't think in whole sentences. We think emotionally. He also used a lot of exclamation points, a habit I picked up and which I still have. Someone counted them in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—some enormous number of exclamation points, up in the thousands. I think it's quite justified, though I've been ridi-

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culed for it. Dwight Macdonald once wrote that reading me, with all these exclamation points, was like reading Queen Victoria's diaries. He was so eminent at the time, I felt crushed. But then out of curiosity I looked up Queen Victoria's diaries. They're childhood diaries. They're full of exclamation points. They are so much more readable than the official prose she inflicted on prime ministers and the English people in the years thereafter. Her diaries aren't bad at all. I also made a lot of use of the historical present (getting back to Emil Ludwig) in my early magazine work, along with eccentric images and metaphors. These were things that I began to use as soon as I had a truly free hand. That was when I began to do magazine work in 1963 for *Esquire*—which was that rarest of things: an experimental mass-circulation magazine.

INTERVIEWER

Presumably there was an editor at *Esquire* who supported what you were up to . . . .

WOLFE

Well, Byron Dobell was the first editor I had at *Esquire.* I've written about this in the introduction to *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby.* The piece about car customizers in Los Angeles was the first magazine piece I ever wrote. I was totally blocked. I now know what writer's block is. It's the fear you cannot do what you've announced to someone else you can do, or else the fear that it isn't worth doing. That's a rarer form. In this case I suddenly realized I'd never written a magazine article before and I just felt I couldn't do it. Well, Dobell somehow shamed me into writing down the notes that I had taken in my reporting on the car customizers so that some competent writer could convert them into a magazine piece. I sat down one night and started writing a memorandum to him as fast as I could, just to get the ordeal over with. It became very much like a letter that you would write to a friend in which you're not thinking

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about style, you're just pouring it all out, and I churned it out all night long, forty typewritten, triple-spaced pages. I turned it in in the morning to Byron at *Esquire,* and then I went home to sleep. About four that afternoon I got a call from him telling me, "Well, we're knocking the 'Dear Byron' off the top of your memo, and we're running the piece." That was a tremendous release for me. I think there are not many editors who would have done that, but *Esquire* at that time was a very experimental magazine. Byron Dobell was and remains a brilliant editor, and it worked out.

INTERVIEWER

Is it hazardous to have a style as distinctive as that?

WOLFE

It became so. At the outset I didn't think of myself as having something called a "Tom Wolfe Style." Many of my first pieces were for the *Herald Tribune*'s new Sunday magazine which was called *New York* and is now an independent magazine. Sunday supplements at that time were like brain candy, easily thrown away. I never had the feeling that there were any standards to writing for a Sunday supplement. So you could experiment in any fashion you wished, which I began to do. Still, I didn't think of it as a "Tom Wolfe Style." Finally, after *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* came out as a book, and I began to get a lot of publicity, people began to write about me and about this style. Suddenly I would start writing an article and I'd say, "Wait a minute. Is this really a 'Tom Wolfe Style?' " Now that is fatal, I assure you. I wrote a number of pieces in the year 1966 that were so bad that, although I'm a great collector of my own pieces, I have never collected them.

INTERVIEWER

Readers have always followed your fascination with clothes, material goods, and so forth. Where does that come from?

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WOLFE

I couldn't tell you in any analytical fashion, but I assume I realized instinctively that if I were going to write vignettes of contemporary life, which is what I was doing constantly for *New York,* I wanted all the sounds, the looks, the feel of whatever place I was writing about to be in this vignette. Brand names, tastes in clothes and furniture, manners, the way people treat children, servants, or their superiors, are important clues to an individual's expectations. This is something else that I am criticized for, mocked for, ridiculed for. I take some solace in the fact that the leading critic of Balzac's day, Sainte-Beuve, used to say the same thing about Balzac's fixation on furniture. You can learn the names of more arcane pieces of furniture reading Balzac than you can reading a Sotheby's catalogue. Sainte-Beuve said, "If this little man is so obsessed with furniture why doesn't he open up a shop and spare us these so-called novels of his?" So I take solace in this. After all, we are in a brand name culture.

INTERVIEWER

Do you read catalogues, for example, to keep up on shoes and so forth?

WOLFE

I must confess to having read furniture-auction catalogues so that if I walked into somebody's living room I'd be able to tell you what these articles of furniture were. When I wrote *Radical Chic,* as a matter of fact, about a party for the Black Panthers at Leonard Bernstein's apartment, I noticed that the platters upon which the Panthers were being served Roquefort cheese balls were gadrooned. They had this little sort of ribbing around the edges of the trays. You may think that's a small point, but I think that small points like that can really make a piece, particularly at the beginning. There's something about a gadrooned platter being served to the Black Panthers that really gives a piece a bite, particularly at the begin-

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ning. It doesn't matter if your audience doesn't know what a gadrooned platter is. Often people are flattered to have an unusual word thrust upon them. They say, "Well, that author thinks I know what he's talking about!"

INTERVIEWER

At that party did you remember such things or do you have to whisk a notebook out and write a note down in the bathroom or wherever?

WOLFE

At that party I did take notes very openly. I was not the only person in the room doing so, incidentally. Charlotte Curtis of *The New York Times* was taking notes a mile a minute, and she did write about the party too. If it's a situation in which it's impossible or very awkward to take notes, I will try to write down everything I can remember before going to sleep. I find that memory-decay is very rapid. Even going to sleep and waking up the next day, there's an awful lot that simply doesn't come back. At least it doesn't come back accurately. So I do it as soon as I can.

INTERVIEWER

Are memorable stories like that assigned to you by editors? How do you pick your subjects?

WOLFE

A great many stories that I did, particularly early in the game, were assigned to me, often things that I had no interest in covering at first. For example, after I did the piece on customized cars, *Esquire* assigned me a piece on the then Cassius Clay, which I did want to do very much, and then a piece on Las Vegas. I felt that Las Vegas was the most tired story imaginable, but I wanted to be in *Esquire* again. And I wanted the money. So I went off to Las Vegas, and the place was a wonderland in a way that

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I had never expected. It turned out to be a very successful story as well; other stories were assigned. There's probably never been a better originator of story ideas in journalism than Clay Felker. Harold Hayes and Byron Dobell at *Esquire* were both very good. I did a story on a stockcar driver in North Carolina, Junior Johnson, who had been a whiskey runner for his father. That was an idea that came from an *Esquire* editor. On the other hand, *Radical Chic,* which was about the party at Leonard Bernstein's, was my own.

INTERVIEWER

Between journalism and fiction, which is the more difficult and which the more satisfying?

WOLFE

The problems are enormous with each, and I wouldn't say that one is any easier than another. I found it extremely difficult to shift from nonfiction to fiction and for reasons that surprised me. One was that I didn't face up to the most obvious thing of all . . . which is that in nonfiction you are handed the plot. You are handed the characters. It just didn't dawn on me how much I was now depriving myself of. The other thing that surprised me when I first started writing *The Bonfire of the Vanities* was that I was not nearly as free technically and in terms of style as I had been in nonfiction. I would have assumed it would be the opposite, since you have carte blanche in fiction, this tremendous freedom. What happened was that all the rules of composition I had been taught about fiction in college and graduate school came flooding back: Henry James's doctrine of point of view, Virginia Woolf's theory of the inner psychological glow. All things were suddenly laws. I was on an unfamiliar terrain and so I'd better obey. My first time around writing *The Bonfire of the Vanities* for *Rolling Stone* I was not nearly as free as I should have been. It took me a long time to realize that I could enjoy the kind of freedom that I'd had

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in nonfiction where I was operating without any rules to speak of. I finally began to appreciate the enormous flexibility of fiction but it really took some doing.

INTERVIEWER

I believe you'd always wanted to do a huge non-fiction book about New York, and somehow you changed your mind. Why did you decide to do the book as fiction?

WOLFE

There were two things. One was personal. Practically everyone my age who wanted to write somehow got the impression in college that there was only one thing to write, which was a novel and that if you went into journalism, this was only a cup of coffee on the road to the final triumph. At some point you would move into a shack—it was always a shack for some reason—and write a novel. This would be your real métier. But by the time I got to the *Herald Tribune* a lot of things were happening in non-fiction. Gay Talese was doing amazing work; so were Jimmy Breslin and people like Tom Morgan at *Esquire* and many others. This was exciting to me and I started writing non-fiction, borrowing heavily, as others did, from the techniques of fiction writers. All along, even though I felt this was where things were happening, there was always a silent and perhaps not-so-silent rebuke from others that said, "This is an elaborate screen you're constructing to avoid the great challenge, which is the novel." So I decided I didn't want to reach the end of my career and look back and say, "Well, gee, I wonder what would have happened if I had tried the novel." I didn't want others saying, "Well, he ducked it. He never faced up to it." Also, I had developed a theory about the future of the novel which I had elaborated to some extent in the introduction to the book *The New Journalism* in which I said that I felt the novel had taken a lot of wrong turns

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since 1950 in the United States and that its future would be highly detailed realism, a kind of hypernaturalism, to borrow a term from Zola. So I knew from the beginning that the type of novel I wanted to write would be that kind.

INTERVIEWER

The Bonfire of the Vanities was first published in *Rolling Stone* as a serial. McCoy, the main character, was originally a writer. Why did you want to write it as a serial novel? Was that another challenge?

WOLFE

For eight months I had sat at my typewriter every day, intending to start this novel and nothing had happened. I felt that the only way I was ever going to get going on it was to put myself under deadline pressure. I knew that if I *had* to, I could produce something under deadline pressure. I found the only marvelous maniac in all of journalism willing to let me do such a thing. That was Jann Wenner at *Rolling Stone.* This book would have never been written if Jann Wenner had not said, "Okay, let's do it. Let's see what happens."

INTERVIEWER

Was it the first fiction you had ever tried?

WOLFE

I had done a short story for *Esquire* called "Oh, the Big-Time, Game-Time, Show-Time Roll" in 1974. It was based on a couple of actual incidents about a black baseball star making a commercial here in New York. It was okay. I didn't see it in the O. Henry collection or anything.

INTERVIEWER

So, you started doing the serial for Jann Wenner . . .

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WOLFE

Yes. I wrote three chapters at the outset thinking that I would have a two-chapter cushion. In case I got in trouble in a subsequent issue I had something to fall back on. Well, Jann wanted me to get off to a glorious start, so he published all three in the first issue! From that time on I was scrambling desperately.

INTERVIEWER

Well, did you have any grand design? Did you know where you were going?

WOLFE

Well, yes and no. I'm a great believer in outlines. The outline for *The Right Stuff,* for example, my non-fiction book about the astronauts, was three hundred pages, cross-indexed. So I did a very thorough outline for *The Bonfire of the Vanities.* Jann Wenner had read it and liked it. Then at the last moment I began to think of what I considered important changes. For example, in the outline everything took place in Manhattan. I began hearing these amazing stories about the Bronx, so I shifted my scene of operations from the Manhattan Criminal Court Building at 100 Centre Street up to the Bronx County Courthouse at 161st Street and the Grand Concourse. I changed the nature of the crime that the story was to pivot upon—actually a Class E felony, not much of a crime—to an automobile accident in the Bronx. Then, at the very last moment, I had gone down to Wall Street and I'd gotten entrée to one of the great investment-banking houses and what I'd seen was so exciting that I said to myself, "Well, maybe I'll change Sherman McCoy from a writer"—which he was in this long outline that I had—"to some kind of Wall Street figure." If anyone cares to look back at the first three chapters of the *Rolling Stone* version of *The Bonfire of the Vanities,* he'll find that Sherman McCoy has no occupation. I was going to give myself the flexibility in the fourth chapter to make him

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a Wall Street figure. Then I got cold feet because I didn't really have the time to work this whole thing out. He remained a writer, a rather boring figure for the most part. He's not right in that version. I hate stories in which a person has an occupation and you never see him working at it, like all those marvelous Cary Grant movies where he's a surgeon, and you never see him in the operating room.

INTERVIEWER

Was the serialization carried out to the end?

WOLFE

Yes, it was. I'm proud of this. It continued for twenty-seven issues. The magazine comes out every two weeks . . . a year and a week over. At the outset I began to wonder if my work would be more like Zola's, Dostoyevski's, or Dickens' . . . all serial novel writers. By the fourth chapter the only thing I wondered about was, would the hole be filled? I was out on Long Island in Southampton where there's a church in the middle of town that chimes the hours all through the night. I can remember it so well. I would go to sleep exhausted about ten o'clock at night. I'd wake up about 11:30 or midnight; I'd always hear the midnight bells, all twelve of those chimes. I had terrible insomnia for about six weeks. I finally realized that, in fact, I could fill the hole, that I would be spared the ignominy of not making the issue.

INTERVIEWER

What a terrifying exercise. Did you ever feel like going to Jann Wenner and saying, "This is too much. To hell with it"?

WOLFE

Well, I didn't really put it quite that way, but to myself many times I said, "Why did I do this? I don't need to do it. I could have written a sequel to *The Right Stuff.*"

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After all, *The Right Stuff* was only the story of the astronauts doing the Mercury program. I could have written a book called *Gemini.* It *was* terrifying. I don't think I had the courage to tell Jann that we had to call it off!

INTERVIEWER

How many words did that mean you had to produce in, let's say, a day?

WOLFE

That wasn't so much the problem. I had to produce about six thousand words every two weeks. That isn't a terrible amount if you're sure of what you're doing, but it's difficult if you don't, especially if you're trying to construct something with real coherence to it. At the beginning it was terrible. Just changing the locale from Manhattan to the Bronx was something that meant an unraveling of all sorts of things in the plot. This is something that happens in fiction. It doesn't happen in nonfiction. You can change the structure of a non-fiction book and, no matter how awkward, it's like an enormous Erector set. It may lurch into ungainly forms, but it's going to hold together because you're dealing with actual facts. On the other hand, when you start playing with your structure in fiction, it's like pulling a thread in a sweater. Everything begins to go in ways you never dreamed of. So I had a continual problem with that; I found myself reworking and rethinking chapters on the spot. I became very much interested in how people had done this successfully. I read a lot of Zola and Dickens and Dostoyevski with this in mind. I came to the conclusion that the master of the form was Zola. Typically Zola would write four or five chapters ahead of time, four or five out of twelve to fourteen chapters. Pick almost any novel by Zola and you'll see that it runs twelve to fourteen chapters because he had a contract to write a novel in the year for a monthly magazine. Now, if you've done that, written forty percent of a novel, by this time you have worked out the most difficult problems. You know

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your characters by now. You know the real course of your plot. You know how you're going to create suspense. By the end of twelve chapters he would have spent his cushion, and he'd now be writing against deadline pressure to finish the book. But that's not so bad. The last half of any book, particularly a book of fiction, is not nearly so difficult as the first half. At the very end, you often see Zola speeding up recklessly. Read the last chapter of that marvelous book *Nana.* Here's a guy who either is terribly tired or had a day and a half to finish . . . to finish a book! But if I had to do it over again, I would make sure I had written thirty-three to forty percent of the book ahead of time.

INTERVIEWER

But would you ever want to subject yourself again to serialization?

WOLFE

I don't think I would.

INTERVIEWER

What's the point of it really?

WOLFE

In this day and age there isn't much point to it. People do not read that way. If people want stories serially they'll go to television.

INTERVIEWER

How close are the characters of the novel to real people?

WOLFE

Only two characters are actually based on real people—Tommy Killian was based on Counsellor Eddie Hayes, and the character of Judge Kovitsky is based on Burton Roberts, who is now the chief administrative and chief criminal judge of the Bronx. Otherwise I steered

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clear of the roman à clef game. I think that's a game of very limited usefulness. In some cases I have composites. For example, Reverend Bacon, the activist minister from Harlem, was based on the sort of figure I had begun seeing as early as 1969, shortly after the poverty program had gotten started.

INTERVIEWER

For research and background, did you go to the holding pens in the Bronx?

WOLFE

I did. I managed to get entrée to the pens, just to see what's going on. I found that, though there were a great many colorful things happening before my eyes, I had no way of getting inside the mind of someone who was in that predicament. Even if you masquerade as a prisoner, you know you're going to be let out. Then I realized that I had to interview people who had been through it. By this time I had met a number of lawyers. They put me in touch with a few middle-class professional defendants—white defendants who had been through something like McCoy. I eventually met four men, one of whom was tremendously helpful. He told me that the most humiliating part of this experience for him came when he was marched through a metal detector which he kept setting off. They kept taking more of his clothes away from him. He still kept setting off the metal detector. Finally, the policeman in charge of the metal detector had a hunch. He told him to lean over and just put his head in the metal detector. This set the thing off. Then he said, "Open your mouth," and he said, "Oh, look at that! You've got a mouth like a coin-changer!" It was the fillings in his teeth. He began calling the other policemen over. He'd say, "Look at this guy. Hey, do it again." He wasn't abusive in language. He didn't lay a hand on him. Suddenly the fact that these police—whom the man had always regarded as his protectors and protectors particularly of people like himself—were now, not in any per-

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verse or bad way, treating him like an object, an object of sport. It was crushing. It crushed what last defenses he had in this situation. Now this is something I could not have gotten except through interviewing. I don't think the unaided imagination of the writer—and I don't care who the writer is—can come up with what is obtainable through research and reporting. I'm firmly convinced of that, particularly in an age like this and particularly if you choose to write about a large city.

INTERVIEWER

I can't resist asking whether, when you were in the holding pens talking to criminals and so forth, you wore the white suit.

WOLFE

Now we're getting down to cases! I'd like to be able to say that I went attired all in white. I didn't. I always wore a suit though and usually a double-breasted suit. That was pushing my luck enough right there! I found early in the game that for me there's no use trying to blend in. I might as well be the village information-gatherer, the man from Mars who simply wants to know. Fortunately the world is full of people with information-compulsion who want to tell you their stories. They want to tell you things that you don't know. They're some of the greatest allies that any writer has.

INTERVIEWER

The Bonfire of the Vanities ends with an epilogue—a shattering epilogue, one page long or so, where you find out that a year later McCoy's back in exactly the same predicament. Was that always in the design?

WOLFE

No, it wasn't. That was one part of the outline that I hadn't worked out. I didn't know whether to make it a happy or an unhappy ending. I could have made it a happy ending, but I felt that this would not have been

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true to the criminal-justice system in New York! Having gotten their hooks into a highly publicized figure like McCoy—and I think this is one of the sad sides of the interaction of the press and the criminal-justice system in large cities—they were not going to humiliate themselves by letting this man off completely if there were any way to hold him. McCoy had committed a Class E felony—leaving the scene of an accident where there has been personal bodily injury. That can be considered an important crime or a very minor crime depending on the mood of the hour. In the case of someone in a highly publicized case, given his background, it would have been treated severely. He would have probably drawn a year in jail and would have ended up having to serve most of it. I had a choice of either giving it a happy ending or spending several more chapters to follow him through the maw and the innards of the criminal-justice system—the hearings, the various court appearances and appeals and all the rest of it. I felt that would be anticlimactic. So I came up with this device of the epilogue—a newspaper article written by the *New York Times.* My model—and this may seem farfetched—was the epilogue to Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* in which the Divers are seen from afar by someone who says, "The last time I saw them they were sitting in a terrace of a hotel having a drink. I should have stopped to say something to them and I never did." It's very poignant. I decided to have this type of monologue-from-afar in the form of a newspaper piece in the *New York Times.* I'm not sure it worked, but that was my solution.

INTERVIEWER

Did it bother you at all that the book was criticized for having so few, if any, sympathetic characters?

WOLFE

Well, I don't like to be criticized, but it didn't bother me a great deal because I felt that this was a book about

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vanity in New York in an age of money fever. In fact, those who triumph in an age like that are seldom what we usually consider heroic and admirable characters. I also looked back at novels about cities that I admire tremendously, John O'Hara's *Butterfield 8,* Zola's *Nana,* Balzac's *Cousin Bette,* and it's hard to find any major character in them who is sympathetic in the usual meaning of that term. Somewhere I ran into a theory which I'd never heard of before, that without love from the author a character is not noble. I was being called incapable of love for the characters. Actually, I was in awe of the characters. I couldn't very well love them.

INTERVIEWER

Thinking back, would you make any changes now?

WOLFE

I might change the ending. The epilogue. Looking back on it I felt it had a somewhat gimmicky quality about it. I still couldn't give it a happy ending. That wouldn't be right.

INTERVIEWER

How long was the title *The Bonfire of the Vanities* in your mind?

WOLFE

A long time. I once took an American Express bus tour of Florence. We reached the Piazza della Signoria where there is wonderful statue of Mercury by Cellini. The driver who was also the guide told the story of the "bonfires of the vanities," which had taken place there. At the end of the fifteenth century the Florentines had just been through a hog-wallowing, hog-stomping, baroque period, and when suddenly this ascetic monk, Savonarola, came forward and said, "Get rid of your evil ways, strip down, get rid of your vanities." A bonfire was built. Most of the things were thrown into the fire voluntarily. Some

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things weren't but most of them were—nonreligious paintings, books by Boccaccio, plus wigs and false eyelashes and all kinds of silver, gold. At first, the citizenry loved it. It's sort of like the granola period we're going into right now. They loved the asceticism of it. Then after two of these bonfires, they'd really gotten very bored with the whole process and besides the Pope was getting a little jealous of Savonarola who was really running the city, and so he was the victim of the third bonfire. Anyway, this idea of a bonfire of the vanities stuck in my mind, intrigued me, and I said to myself how some day I'd write a book called that.

INTERVIEWER

There was nothing in your book that really reflects this title.

WOLFE

No. I started to write an epigraph that would explain this reference, sort of the way John O'Hara in *Appointment in Samarra* has this epigraph by way of an historical note. But every time I wrote it, I came off as Savonarola. So I finally said, to hell with it. The connection is more the fiery itch of vanity. It was a far-fetched analogy. But that was in my mind.

INTERVIEWER

Does criticism bother you? I seem to remember that your book *The Painted Word* about the art world caused a great stir.

WOLFE

Yes. It was the most vitriolic response I've ever had anywhere, much more so than *Radical Chic* or *Bonfire of the Vanities.* The things that I was called in print were remarkable. In fact, there were so many, I started categorizing them. One was "psychiatric insults"—the usual thing: This man is obviously sick. Then there were the

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"political insults"—usually I was called a fascist but occasionally a communist, a commissar. And then there were the curious round of insults I called the "X-rated insults," all taking the same form which was, "This man who wrote the book is like a six year old at a pornographic movie; he can follow the motions of the bodies but he cannot comprehend the nuances." I always thought it was a very strange sort of insult because it cast contemporary art as pornography and I was the child. In various forms this metaphor was repeated by several different reviewers. Robert Hughes used it. He had the full image, the six year old, the grunts and groans, the pornographic movie and the rest of it. In the *Times* John Russell referred to me as a eunuch at the orgy. I think he was afraid that too many of his readers would be overstimulated by the thought of a six year old at a pornographic movie. So I became a eunuch at an orgy. Because of the similarity of the sexual metaphors, I was curious about this and was told later on that there had been a dinner in Bedford, New York shortly after *The Painted Word* came out . . . a number of art world figures, including Robert Motherwell, in somebody's fancy home. The subject of *The Painted Word* came up and Motherwell supposedly said, "You know, this man Wolfe reminds me of a six-year-old at a pornographic movie. He can follow the motion of the bodies but he can't comprehend the nuances." If it's true, it shows what a small world the art world is. Actually that was one of the points I was trying to *make* in *The Painted Word*—that three thousand people, no more than that certainly, with roughly three hundred who live outside of the New York metropolitan area, determine all fashion in art. As far as I can tell, it was Motherwell's conceit; he is an influential, major figure, and it spread from this dinner table in Bedford overnight, as it were.

INTERVIEWER

What was it that outraged them more than anything else in *The Painted Word*?

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WOLFE

Now maybe I'm flattering myself, but I think what made a bigger impact than the usual diatribe was that what I wrote was a history; there's not a single critical judgment in the piece. It's a history of taste, and I think that approach—it's pitted on the level of a history of fashion—was infuriating. The art world can deal very easily with anybody who says they don't like Pollock or they don't like Rauschenberg, so what if you don't. But to say these people blindly follow Clement Greenberg's or Harold Rosenberg's theories, which is pretty much what *The Painted Word* is saying, and that a whole era was not visual at all but literary, now that got them.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any artwork hanging at home?

WOLFE

Yes. Not a lot but I have some. Most of it is by my friend Richard Merkin. I don't know how to characterize his work. His work has titles such as "Van Lingle Mungo Enters Havana." So he's right on my wavelength. He has a very strong palette. Outside his work and a few others, my real passion is caricature. Mostly from the turn of the century and from a couple of magazines, for example *Simplicissimus,* which had artists like Bruno Paul, Rudolf Wilke and Olaf Gulbransson. These were satirical magazines with brilliant illustrators.

INTERVIEWER

It wouldn't be a *Paris Review* interview unless we asked you about your work habits.

WOLFE

To tell you the truth, I always find that a fascinating part of the *Paris Review* interviews. That's the kind of thing writers always want to know: What are other writ-

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ers doing? I use a typewriter. My wife gave me a word processor two Christmases ago which still stares at me accusingly from a desk in my office. One day I am going to be compelled to learn how to use it. But for the time being, I use a typewriter. I set myself a quota—ten pages a day, triple-spaced, which means about eighteen hundred words. If I can finish that in three hours, then I'm through for the day. I just close up the lunch box and go home—that's the way I think of it anyway. If it takes me twelve hours, that's too bad, I've got to do it. To me, the idea "I'm going to work for six hours" is of no use. I can waste time as handily at the desk as I can window-shopping, which is one of my favorite diversions. So I try to be very methodical and force myself to stick to that schedule.

INTERVIEWER

Is there any mnemonic device to get you going?

WOLFE

I always have a clock in front of me. Sometimes, if things are going badly, I will force myself to write a page in a half an hour. I find that can be done. I find that what I write when I force myself is generally just as good as what I write when I'm feeling inspired. It's mainly a matter of forcing yourself to write. There's a marvelous essay that Sinclair Lewis wrote on how to write. He said most writers don't understand that the process begins by actually sitting down.

INTERVIEWER

Hemingway stood up when he wrote. Used the top of his bureau.

WOLFE

Well, actually, so did my namesake, Thomas Wolfe. He wrote using the top of the refrigerator he was so tall . . .

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INTERVIEWER

What about your confidence as you write?

WOLFE

You go to bed every night thinking that you've written the most brilliant passage ever done which somehow the next day you realize is sheer drivel. Sometimes it's six months later that it dawns on you that it doesn't work. It's a constant hazard. I can sympathize with Ken Kesey who once said that he stopped writing because he was tired of being a seismograph—an instrument which measures rumblings from a great distance. He said he wanted to be a lightning rod—where it all happens at once, quick, and decisive. Perhaps this applies to painters, though I don't know. I suspect there are some awful dawns for them too.

INTERVIEWER

Is there any characteristic the fiction writer has that means perhaps more power, more of an effect than can be achieved by the journalist or the essayist? Why fiction, is what I'm really trying to ask.

WOLFE

In answering this, I'm inevitably promoting my own theory of fiction: that you can dramatize reality in fiction so easily and with such economy, bring so many strands of a society onto one plotline. You can have a real impact with fiction provided that you deal with reality, provided you want to show how society works, how it fits together. This has been true at many points in our literary history, most notably in the thirties, with books like *The Grapes of Wrath.* It's hard to remember today the impact of a book like *The Grapes of Wrath.* We're in an age that cries out, I think, for that type of fiction. Instead, most of that impact has come from non-fiction; it's a great time for non-fiction writers because the main terrain—realism—was largely abandoned by an entire generation of tal-

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ented writers. It's a worldwide phenomenon. When I was in Germany last year I became interested in the Berlin Wall—obviously one of the historical epicenters of the twentieth century, this fantastic, medieaval wall built in the mid-twentieth century dividing a city, a whole country in two, literally dividing brothers and sisters from brothers and sisters on the other side. So I asked about the great novels about the Wall written in Germany. I came up with a list of zero! Talented writers weren't going to look at the Wall. Amazing! What are the great Italian novels from the whole era of the kidnapping of Moro, the rest of the terrorist experience? Or what were the great French novels about the North African adventures?

INTERVIEWER

Or Vietnam novels in our country?

WOLFE

Finally now they begin to appear, usually written by people who had not gone to college with the slightest notion of becoming writers, such as our recently resigned Secretary of the Navy, James Webb, who wrote what I consider the finest of the Vietnam novels, *Fields of Fire.* A career military officer, who happened to go to Vietnam and just wanted to write about it.

INTERVIEWER

What denotes a "good" novel?

WOLFE

To me, it's a novel that pulls you inside the central nervous system of the characters . . . and makes you feel in your bones their motivations as affected by the society of which they are a part. It is folly to believe that you can bring the psychology of an individual successfully to life without putting him very firmly in a social setting. After *The Bonfire of the Vanities* came out I was accused of the

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negative stereotyping of just about every ethnic and racial type known to New York City. I would always challenge anyone who wrote that to give me one example. I have been waiting ever since. I think what I actually did was to violate a rule of etiquette—that it's all right to bring up the subject of racial and ethnic differences, but you must treat it in a certain way. Somewhere in the tale you must find an enlightened figure, preferably from the streets, who shows everyone the error of his or her ways; a higher synthesis is created and everyone leaves the stage perhaps sadder but a good deal wiser and a good deal kinder and more compassionate. Well, this just simply isn't the way New York works. The best you can say is that New York is held together by competing antagonisms which tend to cancel one another out. I tried to face up to that as unflinchingly as I could.

INTERVIEWER

What's been the effect of film on your writing?

WOLFE

I've never been consciously affected by film—that is, I've never said to myself, I should set this scene the way it would be done in a movie. I *do* very consciously, however, think about how to set up a scene—whether fiction or non-fiction—and often it may coincide with cinematographic technique. For example, I'm often drawn to start a story with a long shot—as they would say in the cinema. It's an instinctive way of setting up a scene. A wonderful example is the way Truman Capote begins *In Cold Blood*—a very long shot of a Kansas wheat field, gradually focusing in on a solitary farmhouse on the horizon. Another way is to start with a very tight close-up—which I've done especially in my non-fiction. *Radical Chic,* for example, starts with a description of the aforementioned gadrooned silver platter with cheeseballs on it, and then pulls back—to use another cinematic metaphor—and you see that a person down whose gullet the cheeseball is disappearing is one of the leaders of the Black Panthers.

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INTERVIEWER

How would you categorize your political outlook? After *Radical Chic* and to a certain extent after *The Bonfire of the Vanities* you were called reactionary, conservative.

WOLFE

I think of myself as a seer! Those two words, "reactionary" and "conservative," are part of the etiquette of intellectual life in New York City—simply a way of saying "you're bad" or "I disagree with you." Some time ago I attended the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *National Review* at a big party at the Plaza. About 2,500 people there. A reporter came up and asked if I would say that this was a gathering of the neoconservative clan. First I asked him if he spelt clan with a "K." When he assured me he was going to use a "C," I answered him. I said that what we were looking at in the room were 2,500 people, most of whom had never laid eyes on each other, who for one reason or another had not gone along with the official gag for the last quarter-century. I think that's about what it amounts to.

—George Plimpton

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Randy Blasing

Hymn to the Sun

for Mutlu

I

Sleeping within earshot of the Aegean
once more, I forget where I am
a second & mistake the surf's white noise
for rain, unheard-of here

in summer. July Fourth, & the fireworks
all the apricot stars provide
leave me oohing & ahing like my mother
watching the real thing with me at North Commons

when I was eight. The child
conceived but inconceivable
in this house a year ago is two months
into his—& our—new life. Though he's present

in the flesh, he's still not to be believed.
His feet are the same color, size, & shape
as Eberhard erasers, perfect
for scuffing out any trace of his father's

footsteps. When birds applaud the sunrise, one big
coral rose unfolding, his blue eyes open
like morning glories, & he smiles, face breaking
into light like a sunflower.

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II

Back at the Fisherman's Hotel in ancient
Halicarnassus for another summer
ten years ago, we woke up our first morning

& found our old boatman's
Antioch (named for his hometown) was missing
from the line-up of small craft all along

the shore. By noon we'd heard the news: asleep
or drunk, he'd fallen overboard last night
& drowned (he always joked about not swimming),

while his group of Americans below
slept peacefully & drifted until dawn.
That afternoon we watched men carry him,

wrapped in a green cloth like a movers' pad
crisscrossed with rope, & take turns shouldering
his dead weight through the streets for no more

than seven steps apiece—one for each day
of the weeks that run away with our lives—
in a kind of frantic dance that went on

until they got where they were bearing him,
& we continued, for the moment, walking
the opposite direction in the circle.

III

A cicada in the wild olive tree
outside our door pulses
like a fire alarm drilling kids in school.

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Only this time
the fire is real: the sun
is burning us alive.

IV

On Bastille Day we ride into the city
on a heat wave & buy a graphite shade
("Elysian gray") of Renault, free
to write our own ticket in the future.

Every day "night condos," which is to say
cinder-block shanties owned by squatter's rights
the law grants whoever builds a roof
over his head before the sun rises

on it, climb higher up the mountainside
back of town, where they stand
like an ever-expanding house
of cards. Below, where Sparrows, Hawks, & Falcons

made by Fiat circle the poisoned bay,
a last old house with its marble facade
shining through the diesel haze is slated
to be crossed off the map by a new freeway.

V

Outside NATO's mirrored Southeast Command
Headquarters, the flags of many
nations stand saluting
the wind off the olive-
drab sea. One of the MP's on guard duty

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squeezes his Uzi & smiles to himself
at his good luck to be watching
the legendary women of Izmir,
not waiting for the dust to rise
back in some Hittite village buried deep

in Anatolia. Meanwhile, a boy
with a rubber shoe on one foot
& a blue plastic sandal on the other
peddles the golden local variation
of sesame bagels stacked up to look

braided together on the big square tray
he balances on his head, round face freckled
as with those selfsame seeds, & a grown man
on a bike crates a honeycomb
of brown eggs through traffic

as though they were gold. On the quai
this morning, a guy hangs
over a freighter's side, painting the *s*
in *Tigris* the same blue
the water was just twenty years

ago & is today
in every last postcard of the modern
city, & lives in his own world as surely
as I misrepresent things putting them
in words, as if I were at home.

VI

Home after the birth, I entered our bedroom
alone & saw the handwriting
on the wall: the photographs nailed to it

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were doomed. No more
shots one of us had taken of the other,
like the black-&-white you got of me staring

back at myself
in the Huntington's lily pond
—my shadow burned into a sheet of paper—

& no more uninhabited
landscapes like the sun-tanned blue vista
you froze in Cappadocia

of a potato field's lone tree
backed by a not-so-grand
canyon & Mount Argaeus, still snowed under

in August. We'd stopped our beige Hertz Renault
& stolen the season's last apricot
dangling from a branch no one, to our knowledge,

guarded, when a young man on a red bike
rode out of nowhere, eager
to talk. People were strong

around there, he said, but life was so hard
on his plateau that all of them wore out
by thirty-five, his voice as gravelly

as the mountain stream we'd heard when we lay
down beside it
earlier in the day, sick as tourists . . .

Thinking out loud, I told myself
we'd soon stick pictures of the newcomer
around the room & populate each future

view with him. For now, he lies & studies
an olive tree at sea in the wind, eyes
dancing, arms & legs churning away,

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ecstatic. He sees leaf upon leaf flutter
like his small fingers in response, my own
ten fingers composing this candid picture.

VII

Diamond-blue Venus trapped
between the prongs

of tonight's white-gold crescent moon
can't hold a candle to the flash points

of the baby's eyes now as he examines
his hand like a jeweler sizing up

a precious stone, or an astronomer
discovering a star.

VIII

Each time the baby tugs
on his bottle, I feel his tongue

work the nipple like a sunfish
nibbling the bait at the end of my line

when I was small & fished
Leech Lake with my father.

IX

Turning my son's globe, I spot a flyspeck
at the center of the sky-blue Pacific:
Midway Island. It's one of those places

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my father told us Boy Scouts all the war
stories about, everybody huddled
not around a campfire but in the glare

of a red Coleman that burned white
as the sun each day above the green lake
crawling with snaky weeds: Camp Many Point.

Moths dived into the flame like kamikazes
as he fleshed out his memories by thumbing
through *Destroyers,* his infallible bible.

Listening, we waited for our chance to gather
our own stories, all in good time.

X

A perfect circle, the red bull's-eye sun
glares through the white sea mist at ground level,
& the stooped melon man, dwarfed as ever
by his scarecrow-like sunflowers

hanging their doomed heads, stands
against it like a shadow once again
to count how many of his gold casabas
have ripened or been stolen overnight.

Here where melons are worth their weight in gold,
yesterday this earth-bronze skinflint refused
money for my birthday melon because
it looked too nearly perfect to be sold.

XI

Outside the door, a lamb on death row bleated
through the night like someone with the dry heaves.

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In the morning he's sacrificed:
hogtied, blindfolded, throat slit, all the little
children suffered to watch (life not being
for the squeamish) & flinch perceptibly
as the lamb jerks his last & bleeds & bleeds,
Isaac's stand-in even at this late date

in history. Turning away, I hear
a rushing sound somewhere—water fanning
out across a yard's cracked dry earth? The eyes
beat ears as witnesses, writes Heraclitus:
red fire is sweeping through brown weeds nearby,
the one true god making its presence known.

XII

It always starts no bigger than a star,
a distant fire still the size of a spark,

& in full view mushrooms
into a blood-orange

fireball: the yellow sun rises
out of Asia, an H-bomb at ground zero.

All day the light
is one long blinding white nightmarish flash.

XIII

I dream of taking our small son to visit
your father's grave, an oversize bee box
topped with a round enameled porcelain
likeness of him not long before he died

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at thirty-two. Above our heads the pines
that should be cypresses thrive on the lack
of water, old as death (not these
particular examples but their kind).

As I imagine remembering the scene,
our son is big enough to stand
in the dust & hang on my thumb the way
you clutched your father's thirty years before.

He slipped through your fingers into dark air
like a helium balloon you forgot
not to let go of as a little girl
leaving the fair at nightfall in his arms.

XIV

Last night I dreamed I'd lost you, & my life
was over, too. After all, you showed me
how to live, teaching me to look at things
I'd never seen. My grief at losing you
was like my panic at the thought
of going blind. Sharp-eyed
as the sun, you zero in on the sparrow's
every feather where, at one point, I didn't
even see a sparrow. Not a single
particular beneath
your notice, you quicken
each minute with your minute observations.
Lost in detail? Not on your life! Without
details, I'm lost & don't know where time goes.

Yesterday I paid a routine visit
to the village fountain—a roadside spigot
I'd have missed if I weren't watching
for it—& saved the day
by opening my eyes to a mundane

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vision. Surrounded by red plastic buckets
& silver pails, light-darkened faces lined
like the cracked end-of-August earth, three women
squatted on their haunches in ordinary
floral-print dresses—morning glories, orange
poppies, smoky tobacco leaves—& what
teeth they had left gleamed in the sun:
gold. The three Fates indicating my life
is flashing like a dream before my eyes?

XV

September means it's twenty years ago
this month I swam in salt water
here the first time in my life, hot springs veining
the marbled sea. Since then, I've dipped

into San Clemente's gold-flecked Pacific
& had the wind shocked out of me
by Maine's Atlantic at Acadia,
cold & clear as machine-made ice. The sea

isn't the enemy fresh water was
in Minnesota: there, I never thought
I'd learn to swim, dunked in chlorine while clinging
to the end of my rope

all winter &, each summer, thrown
into a lake, where sinking to the muddy
bottom was like imagining
polio. My salty

tears of fear & disappointment that showed
what others called my true colors in fact
proved I had it in me to stay afloat
when I found myself at sea in the world.

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I only had to discover my points
of correspondence with it & I'd surface
in my element, buoyed by my inner
resources on the salt-white page.

XVI

Down on my hands & knees, nose to the ground,
I'm not a Muslim praying on a rug

like a bed of roses but a latter-day
fire-worshiper sniffing out a live

magenta carnation that took the whole
summer to bloom

under the sun, my be-all & end-all
touching all things.

XVII

Sunday is not the day the village worships
but a day of rest just the same: I wake
the gas man for a blue tube of propane,
& the postmaster wearing his all-business
grimace walks his little girl past the closed

new post office. Along the quai, the boats
anchored in the mirrored water still ride
on their dreams, while in the outdoor
restaurants the chairs have climbed up
on the tables & sleep, legs in the air.

In the Palace Barbershop, a boy reads
& sees how Arabs in a synagogue
yesterday blew twenty Istanbul Jews
to pieces, arms & legs in living color
on the graphic *New Century*'s front page.

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XVIII

I was past forty when I harvested
my first olives this September, the tree
in question not a hundred yet & still
a baby. Spotting their black beauty marks

like periods that call an end
to their growing season, I went
out on a limb & reached the clustered fruits
peeping through the leaves like green eyes hidden

behind silver veils. The tree stands for peace
because it lives forever & its gifts
sustain so many morning, noon, & night.

Bent over backwards now along the lines
of tonight's equinoctial gale, it gives
shape to the wind.

XIX

The first day of school, the village children
in black-&-white uniforms flock the narrow
streets like magpies. Heads bowed
above printed pages & eyes

trained on blackboards, they'll watch all color bleed
from the world as they learn by heart the rules
of grammar & the laws of number used
to quell the riot of impressions summer

incites in their senses. The sun, late riser
on this inaugural day
of fall, buries itself in clouds

that could be mountains, the kids left to stumble
through shadows if they want to see the light
letters & figures once sparked in my mind.

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XX

Stars mist the blacked-out sky the last night
of September like gold dust carried off
by desert winds, one more summer's

treasure of days scattered
out of reach & reduced
to grains of sand the bully time is kicks

in my face. My head spins
with constellations drawn about as finely
as patterns in a Turkish rug that borders
on embroidery & grounds my eyes in what

lies under my nose. I have tried to weave
such a spell myself by tracing each thread
that ties me to the farthest star, a point
of light that comes to a point in my hands.

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Terese Svoboda

Inventor

The jay streaks through the lilacs
in color clash.
I note down: *Invent*
outdoor birdswing
so birds drunk
on berries fall off in plaid
in front of my window.
I file it. After all,

the pussywillow's barely tufted—
I have time.
At the drain, lifting its feet,
a Modigliani bird—another invention?
The brook agrees
so brookishly, gulping at runoff
like a bear in spring,
like my husband. He didn't trust my patents:

the gutter chain
the collapsing arthritic's cane
a lever for pulling old stumps
in heavy rain

But every act harbors a corresponding gadget.

It is that way with God:
adjusting the acorn, locking the tree.
With the womb, He was clearly Italianate,
the bulbous lines, the excess.
I often think of Him
humming Beatles songs like me, over
six mason jars of improved pickling—

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my offspring?
The dog laughs. You heard it:
a choke, then black gums, a frothing irony.
He's all wet from rescuing bones
from the brook. He drops them in,
then goes in after.
The brook's rising with bones and I'm afraid
the electricity will fail. Will the dog

save me in his laughing?
That's what this invention's for:
the automatic rosebush waterer,
hooked to the sun and this wheel,
in perpetuity. Once a pirate working
on my outboard told me, Betty, better sand
trickling in the hourglass than a shifting dune.
Even the Sudanese
plant borders of aloe against the drifts.
Besides, I like the look of roses.

Oh, that's the husband at the door, scratching.
Nights his furry self stands naked
before me, until the dog
removes his stuffing.
O bear! Only by opening
the blinds do I see he's bleeding.
But it's me, not him, aching
with overdue maternity,
the inventor.
A simple drawerful of cobwebs
kept for emergency does for him,
self-sticking,
then together we apprise
the chimney,
holding hands and chatting about the soot stains.
That was in winter before he died, the deft
air stealing all we were speaking.

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Yesterday
a patent came for my speech retrieval unit,
an unusual event, even for me, because
the government usually can't get
past the drawings. And these were intricate:
I had the duck by the neck, her feet
in food coloring, each step
inked in. It all made sense—listen
to the ducks now. And just in time
for the aspect—ghosts are aspects, aren't they?
Of all but speech I have memory,
that one sense shy of mimicry.

In the spring—now, in fact—
I take the black fly larvae off rocks
in the rapids.
On toast, pre-maggot, the very eggs
of mortality, by eating them I figure
I can lure Death itself, a raccoon
washing and washing in the dark,
and from there, patent the trap.
I'll be rich if it works.
Works, go the frogs, *works, works.*

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Two Poems by Lucie Brock-Broido

Haute Couture Vulgarity

Winter 1989

To Recipient Unknown—

I am moved, Sir, by the plangency of the hand as it curls out from between the bars to unchain its palmer's chastity, a mummer's wave to Media, the angst of evening news in the blackened blue horizon of a vulgar suppertime, at the long Holy table of austere woolly feast. There will be ruin in unwelcome worldliness.

Imperial wizards roam the south of things, white Trash Arcana, cleaning this pale earth with their long rayon robes. There is much to be said for shrouding—spells cast in the old fraternal chants, the brotherhood—no one knows the Riff, the tune, but they—who understand the incensed, the insensible, the Song. I have been unwelcome in diurnal worlds. These people immolate themselves for cause, & I am mere effect, no Flame.

In the pageantries of mystics—in the hereafter & the heretofore, the Schutzstaffel pulses like an insect swarm in heat—everything which has power is Rhythmic & plagued. Hail then to the arms & legs which move in unison, to those who sleep or fly by night, the syncopated guard which guards this land from any but the bluest eye.

In Tornado Alley, the storms come like holy bowling balls down a long beige lane, striking the Most Mundane, the Plain, the God-Fearing Simple, the Moonfaced, the

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Righteous, the Just Married, the Unfashioned, the Accidentally Aryan Kin. This weather—an unwelcome shaman, punk funnel, white magic, black sheep, all through the oat belt, land of a sepia retrouve charm. *Then why not buy a goddamn big Winnebago—& Drive.*

You should be glad, Sir, after all, not to live near me. I have too much of the martyr, would set myself ablaze—just for the bright light of the fire, a curiosity, for a cause if I had one, a Flame.

Could we see all we hope, or hear the whole we fear told tranquil, like another tale, there would be madness near.

The church steeple of exact midnight, erect in the unheard of mist of January, too warm to be Real, the cat's low yowling, hellering in fight or Heat, in the mist, my darling, each of us will be taken to a corridor somewhere, one by one & held down by the wrists—Be Good, this will hurt a little, hypodermically. Be pristine in excess Rhetoric, vary the baroque of the High Romantic Tongue, regard the Nun starving for idea. There will be ruin in a new world worldliness.

All are very naughty, & I am naughtiest of all,
Ever—

His,
Penitent Friend

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Into Those Great Countries of the Blue Sky of Which We Don't Know Anything

February 1990

Master—

Today has been a fair day, very still & blue. Tonight the snow will hunch on branches, shifting slightly like chicks hatched in a metal drawer bunched in rows, on the way to slaughter, incubating.

The oak trees—ruined bare—tower in the sky like stick figures, graceless in wind, as schizophrenic children draw themselves as sticks, plugged in. *How I long to see you there at twilight in the door,* your old oak chair pulled up by the window, counting the white hours until Spring.

Sometimes I think I will be broken by your lukewarm Hand. Sometimes the triremes of the redundant Rush row over me, a Sabbath day of ritual, a few sweet hours, groomed as the fields combed over in rows of alfalfa wheats, burnt down by Winter, ragged as Crows. If I could have your Hands on me, I would wish them on my face, cupped in the head's heart shape, unpunishing.

Then, at morning, the dowager who dwells in the Round House across the road—a sea captain's widowed wife—will pass on like a wren in dust—bearing her into those blue countries of the great sky *of which we don't know anything.* Not knowing the Sexton's address at sea, on land I will interrogate the bramble of her yard. She has only a sister, no god. Last Fall, when she buried her garden I watched the hump of Winter cower in the garden path, crouching at the Circumference of her house like rows of Prayers in their pews around an altar lit by blue steam rising up.

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What it must be like there in the pitch of Time, in Heaven an hour is for Always, like an ancient Viking tribe in Vessels, rowing home. I will be gliding in the slender dirty canals of the Ephemeral, disheveled as a woman face down in her bed, praying hard for Heat. *Does God take care of those at sea?*

The evenings grow colder now. I miss the gentians' greed, the Hand that tends the gentians' greed. Before the fields go blue again in Spring, before the fields break open for a wide blue afternoon. When you wake crouching in your small Venetian boat, I will be long sliding toward Oblivion—*you tire me*—

Till Angels fill the Hand that Loaded—
Mine

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William Logan

The Rising Sun

I

Along the rented sands of New York bight
used bandages and needles wash ashore.
The summer islanders are in a roar,
reduced to August in a living hell
where acid burns the living lobster's shell,
the summer houses cost a grand a week,
and from the chartered buses Japanese
tourists descend, a Nikon in each hand,
to take some last remembrance of the other life
against a glowering sunset and bloody sand.

II

Who wouldn't envy glass-plate negatives
of a preening Kawakami Otojiro
home from his triumphal tour of Europe,
where royalty applauded his "kabuki" masters,
the unemployed old actors who were paid
to barnstorm Christian backwaters like Germany?
The peacock, preparing for the demi-monde
of his adoring audience in Tokyo
a foreign masterpiece called *Hamlet.*
Act I, scene ii, the aging princeling enters
a dreary Gothic court of ricepaper
where lately murd'rous doings, etc.,
enters, home from philosophy at Wittenberg,
wearing a kimono and riding a bike.

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And from his bike delivers the soliloquies,
more eloquent for being caught on th'air
as Kawakami takes his turns and figure eights,
Oh what a rogue and peasant slave . . . am I!
The prince's silk kimono, steeped in black
dyes that set off reeds and golden dragonflies,
reminded all, the world was Japanese,
casting out the magics of the newly known,
the western world that clumsily disembarked
from Commodore Perry's line of creaking ships.
When Utagawa Hiroshige carved
a *Picture of Prosperous* (not Prospero's)
America, the wood-block print still conjured
the land of water wings in the water world,
surveying as a typical native scene—
more Henry James than *Harper's Monthly Magazine*—
not clipper ships foundering or foundries becalmed
but an antique Danish castle (near Copenhagen,
sans Hamlet, sans the bike), the idle rich
idling along in their ecological niche,
and, in the background, a spiky crest of palm.

III

All summer, while shoals of bottlenosed dolphins
drowned off poisoned, viral, northern beaches,
men roamed the parking lots of southern malls
begging for signatures. They wanted us
to vote their state an English-only paradise.
In such a country, no one wants literature,
with its Victorian comforts, or discomforts.
One day the English language will be dead.
But on the clogged streets of the Ginza, English rules
on punk-rock T-shirts and on shopping bags,
cheap souvenirs of the dying, distant art:
"Lets sports violent all day,"
or, more homely, "Do the sincere hearts?"

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John Yau

Postcard from Trakl

Memory's branch quivers
beneath the weight of a butterfly

How am I to know what it wants
without asking

Could it be that simple, the question
and then the answer

Why do we fall outside of these additions
or consult the zodiac surrounding us

read its rotten walls and bulb glare
Why substitute names for things

when the things name us
(our vowels and consonants)

into their sleep,
one from which they will never awaken

Am I just an echo drifting back to myself
who is sitting beneath the river

drinking air
Something must have told me to say this

A rock or the memory of a rock
falling toward the shadow it once owned

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Pictures

Mark Tansey

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Sunstruck Philosophers

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Grammatologists

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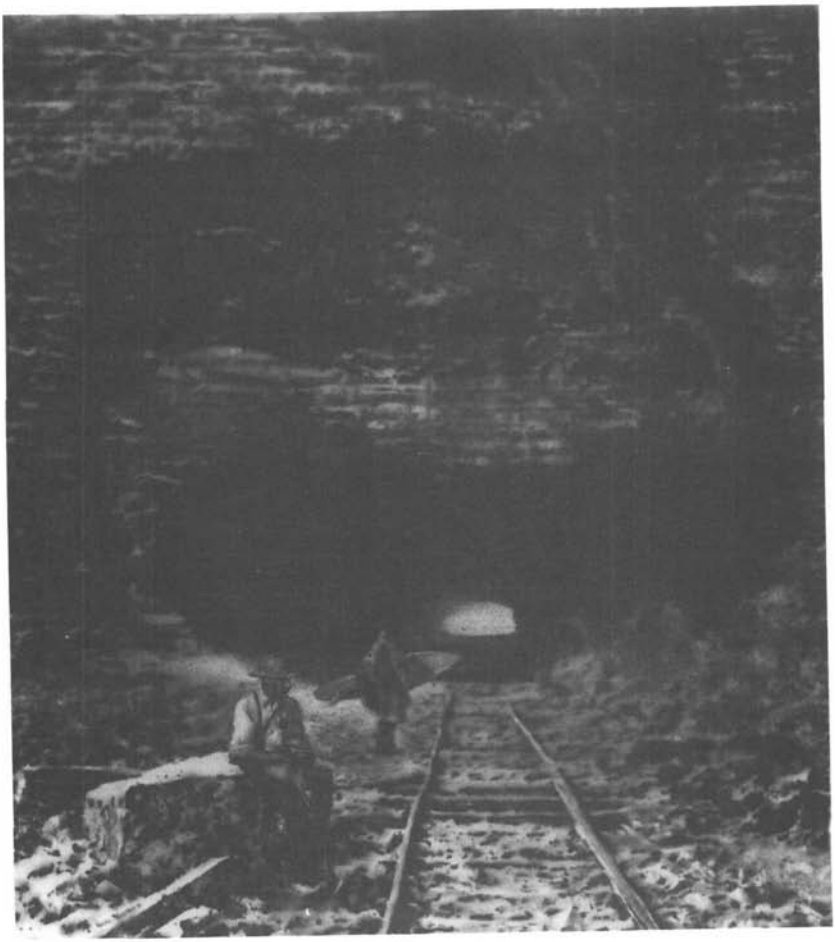

Sola Scriptura

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Close Reading

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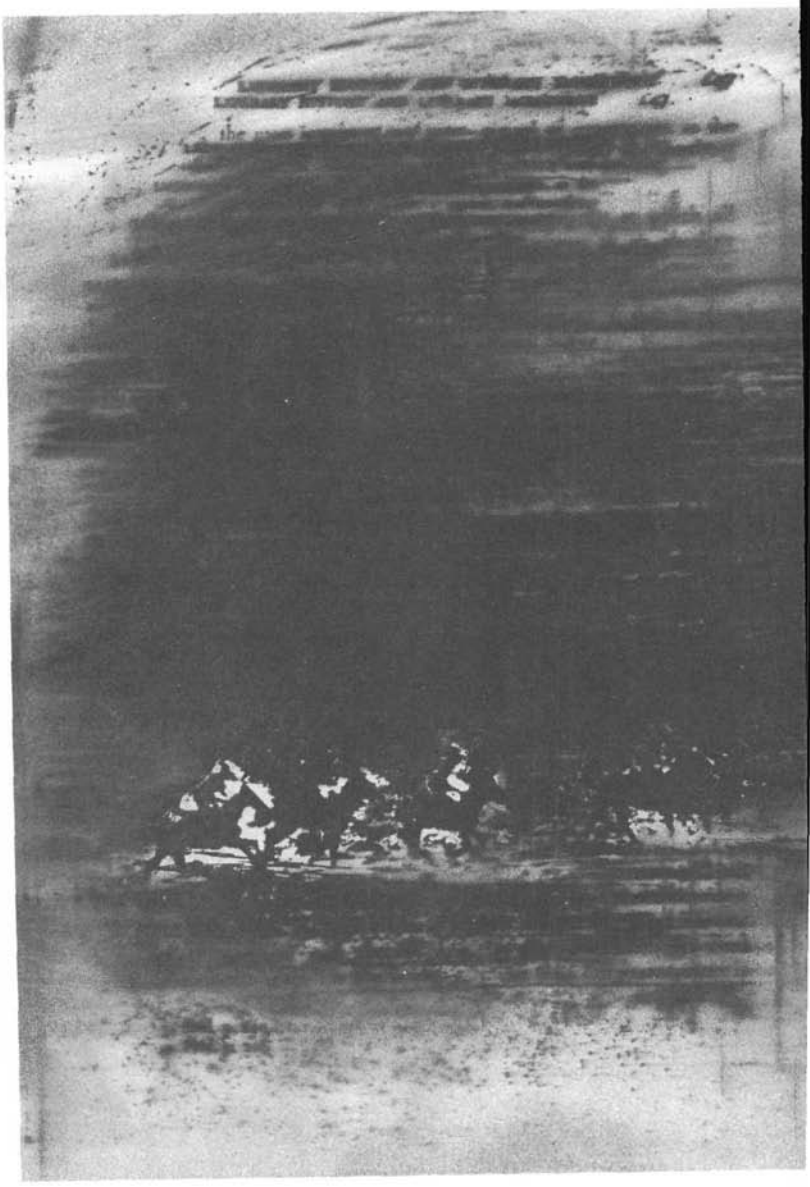

Incursions

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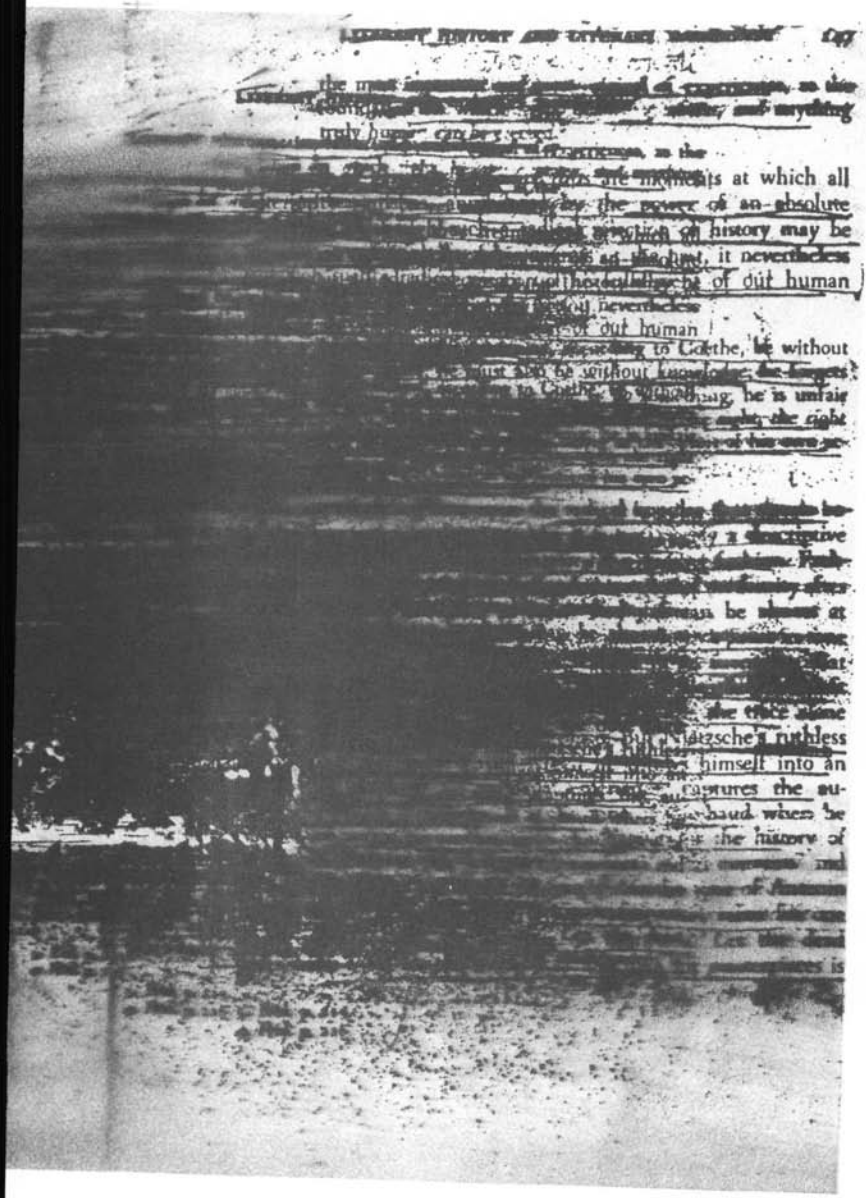

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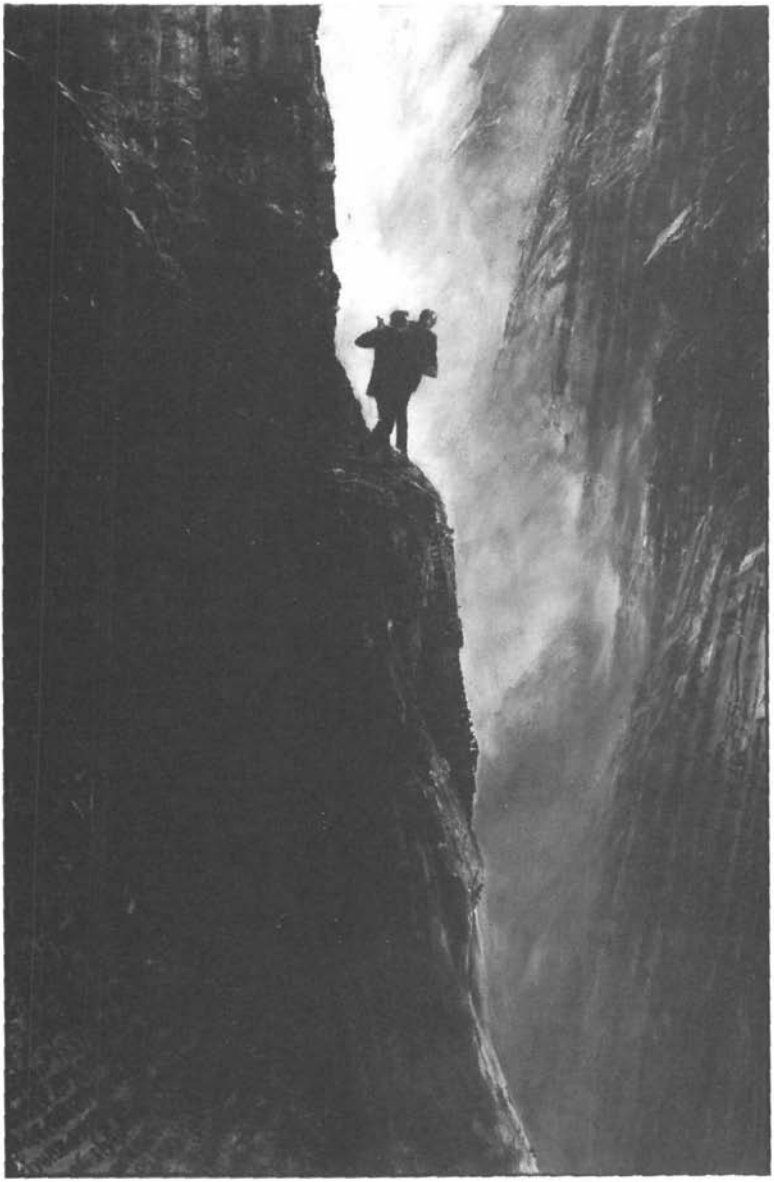

Derrida Queries de Man

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Under Erasure

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I See a Woman May Be Made a Fool

Ben Sonnenberg

There was a Rembrandt drawing of a lion above Sabina's bed. When Francesca sleeps there, the lion looks down on *Rose White and Briar Rose Slumbering,* or some such scene by Burne-Jones. By day the Rembrandt lion beholds Sabina and Francesca getting dressed and undressed (sometimes I'm in the room). They sing Schumann duets and smell of Doblis. Now and then they're convulsed by certain words only they understand: *Baldwin!* . . . *Pur-ple Heart!* . . . Sometimes, through the smoke of my cigarette (in a wooden holder from Dunhill), I see their nipples and pubic hair. The air is warm from the minor labors of young women wearing perfume.

Sabina's room was filled with books. Something in their arrangement told me that she was lonely and proud. I thought, lonely like me. And, I thought, if we become lovers, as Francesca wants, Sabina's pride will help keep me from being a failure. . . .Sabina was good-looking,

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with a wonderful figure, lots of blond hair (like her lion) and very small hands and feet.

I was transferred from Francesca to Sabina easily, as if she and Francesca were doing a thing they'd done often before. First we went out as a threesome; then Sabina and I were going to see Francesca in, I remember, *The Apollo of Belloc;* then Sabina and I were going out to operas and concerts and plays by ourselves. Soon I was smiling. Sabina was all smiles. Francesca was smiling, too.

Sabina was six years older than I, better schooled, better read, better traveled: she would teach me everything. Sabina was *fierce* (a word with her: *fierce*) and her anger, having authority, seemed to draw others near; whereas my bad manners put people off. Sabina was an Enigma, I was a "problem." Sabina was disconsolate, I was "sullen." She looked like a Lady in Tennyson: immured, enchancelled, enisled. *Rouse me!* her eyes said. Her lips said, *Fuck off!* Pretentious to others, Sabina was adorable to me.

I wanted to write stories about New York like those by James Joyce about Dublin. I wrote one about an out-of-work governess, Johanna Kibbe. One winter evening she goes into a *Konditorei* on Third Avenue near Eighty-Sixth Street. Waiting her turn, she meets another governess. "Why, Johanna Kibbe!" "Why, Maria Bench!" They haven't seen one another for years and they sit down and have coffee. Maria Bench tells her a story from the *Daily Mirror* that day. A man commits suicide in an Automat by sprinkling cyanide on his piece of pie and eating it and then an old woman is found dead of cyanide on the street not two blocks away. The old woman was a scavenger who haunted the Automat balcony. When she saw someone leave she ran down and ate the food that was left. Maria Bench, who has worked for the same Jewish family for years, asks about the family Kibbe is working for, and Kibbe lies. They say good-bye and Kibbe goes to the Automat for dinner. Crossing Eighty-

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Sixth Street, she feels envious of Maria whom she had always despised. After her dinner she starts to list the many city playgrounds she has been to over the years: "all the mean enclosures of the city." (The story was called "A Small Enclosure.") The loneliness of her life is about to overwhelm her. She is watching a man who is eating alone at the table next to her. When he gets up she sees that he hasn't finished his pie. She reaches out and grabs it. The last line of the story was, "It burst jubilantly through her fingers."

Sabina was writing a story about a retired diplomat who lived alone in Camargue. The story involved the legend of the two Marys: Mary Mother of Christ and Mary Magdalene, who came, after the Crucifixion, "with their dark servant Sarah," to the coast of France (to Les Stes Maries). Sabina wrote the beginning over and over again. I never learned how the story went on. She was also writing an essay about Remy de Gourmont, the author of *Letters to the Amazon* and *The Physiology of Love.* On her shelves were the many yellow-backed volumes of his *Promenades litéraires* and *Promenades philosophiques.*

Our summers together were filled with books and music and cooking and long drives. Strauss' "Ariadne auf Naxos" and Wolf's Spanish and Italian songbooks were our favorite music. We read *La Chute* by Albert Camus, *Zazie dans le métro* by Raymond Queneau, *L'Histoire d'O* by "Pauline Réage" and *Anti-Dühring* by Friedrich Engels.

I liked our both being writers and I liked Sabina being "blocked." I liked it that our reactions were the same to music and books and people, that our locutions were often the same and that we twirled our hair the same way as we spoke. I liked it that, although we were lovers for more than two years, we had almost no jealous scenes.

I did not like it that we both lived with our parents. I did not like it that her menstrual periods were so painful that for half of each month her breasts were swollen and I couldn't touch them. I did not like it that often there

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was a question about whether we'd sleep together that night. And I did not like it that while Sabina had a job, in publishing, I could find nothing "gainful" to do. Surely that would change if we lived together? We never managed to, alas, except in the summers in the country, in St. James and Cutchogue, Long Island, where there were no jobs worth having.

Of course, to imply that I never was jealous isn't strictly true. My jealousy was (how should I put this?) *thinned* by my sense of Sabina's latent bisexuality: when together with Francesca, the picture was half Gabrielle d'Estrée et Sa Soeur Jacqueline (School of Fontainebleau, in the Louvre), half Egon Schiele in some imagined stage design for Wedekind's *Lulu* plays.

After our second summer my father said to me, "Are you being fair to Sabina?" Meaning was I keeping her from meeting someone more suitable? I didn't know if I wanted to marry, but I was in love with Sabina and she was in love with me. I wanted to live with Sabina, and now and then, we looked at apartments to rent.

After two years, encouraged by my analyst, I took the great risk of separating from Sabina. I promised her I'd find us a house overlooking the Mediterranean where she'd have a workroom and I'd have one, too. One of my father's clients was American Export Lines. He got me the "owner's cabin" on a tramp steamer for Lisbon, and in 1957, in early spring, I embarked with my car and several boxes of books. I wore a long-skirted raincoat and carried an ashplant as I thought became an exile.

In Lisbon I met a collector of art, Carlos Cudell-Goetz. Hans Dreier, Sabina's father, had given me his name. He lived in a small apartment with his enormous collection. Paintings, sculpture, pottery; north German painting and icons from Crete, Gothic wood carvings, Catalan frescoes and Japanese woodblock prints. Paintings and sculpture were everywhere. Chinese, Coptic and pre-Colombian art. On the ceilings, on the backs of doors. He had an

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Egyptian sarcophagus and a totem pole. He told me that he collected only what he could restore.

While I was there a small neat man let himself in without knocking. "Benslimon, Oswaldo." He made a short bow.

"My best friend," said Cudell-Goetz. Senhor Benslimon wore a gold bracelet loosely on his left wrist, and I noticed that Cudell-Goetz was wearing two expensive gold watches on his. They took me to a nightclub to hear the *fado* singer Amalia Rodriguez with whom Cudell-Goetz appeared to be on intimate terms. Senhor Benslimon put his hand on my thigh. He told me he ran a parador, under license from the government, and asked me if I'd make a delivery for him on my way south. A package that Senhor Cudell-Goetz would give me in a day or two. "Glad to," I said. "What's in it?"

"Cigarette lighters," he said. "You need a license to own a lighter in Portugal. Can you believe that?"

"What a barbarity," I said.

The package wasn't large. I delivered it. Senhor Benslimon showed me his own collection. He said it was "a *sentimental* collection." Meerschaum pipes, fans, mantillas, parasols, cigarette cases, razors; and best of all, in expensive wooden frames, hinged to the wall, in an upstairs room, a vast array of cigar bands with portraits on them of the rulers of Europe, Africa, South America and Asia, many long deposed: King Carol, King Zog, Tsar Nicholas II, Kaisers Wilhem I and II, Otto von Bismarck, King George V, King Chulalongkorn (of Siam), King Manuel II, King Alfonse XIII, and Sgt. Fulgencio Batista. Senhor Benslimon made a pass at me there, as I knew he would. I said no: politely, I hope: and drove south, never again to see so impressive a private cigar-band collection.[1]

[1]A still greater cigar-band collection is in the Mares Museum in Barcelona. There used to be cigar-band bazaars every Sunday in the Plaza Mayor in Madrid.

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I found a small farm east of Málaga, Granja Amos, and moved in. First, though, I spent a month in Madrid. One morning, after the Prado, I picked up a lonely young English girl. "Where shall I take you?" I asked her. Her eyes said, Take me wherever you want. I took her instead to the church of San Antonio de la Florida, to see the Goya decorations there.

I also met a young woman at a horse show one day. We went riding a couple of times. Her seat was faultless, her hands were just right. She lived with her diplomat parents in the calle Serrano. I took her to the Instituto Valencia y Don Juan to see the Hispano-Moresque pottery and otherwise spoiled my chances with her by telling her of Sabina.

Another morning, after the Prado, I ran into the violinist Alexander Schneider. *Who was it Posie was fucking at the Hotel Albert?* he said. I said, *Why, Sasha, I thought it was you:* feeling both retroactive jealousy and pride in my urbanity. I told him I was going to Salzburg to see Glenn Gould. Does Glenn sleep with women? Does Glenn sleep with men? Sasha told me of an older woman in Toronto who he said was Glenn's patron. I kept trying to walk arm in arm with him which I thought was continental. Every few steps he would stop and stand away until finally I got the message.

At Granja Amos, I grew a beard. Waiting for Sabina, I looked at the Mediterranean in the evening and said, *Alas, so all things now do hold their peace . . . The sea is calm, the waves work less and less . . . .*

I was *not* calm. I was restless and lonely. I worked at my writing less and less. I missed Sabina. Jealousy came in astonishing fits. I had never been so jealous before. I had looked forward to an ideal life with Sabina: good books, good talk, good faith, good sex. Now even her letters, with their amusing reports of bland and blameless activities, made me writhe. I studied them for evidence of lust and riot underneath. I kept remembering a photograph of her that hung in her bathroom in New York.

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She was naked on a beach. Only her lower torso showed. A mollusk shell was on her stomach. Her legs were a little apart. The photographer had been her lover. What if he turned up in New York?

> A thousand fantasies
> Begin to throng into my memory
> Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
> And airy tongues . . .

Sabina was coming in September. And it was only May.

I went to Morocco. In Moslem countries, Freud tells us in "Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Homosexuality and Paranoia," men look on one another as potential objects of affection and not as rivals for the love of a woman. In Tangiers I tried to act jaded, like Michel in Gide's *L'Immoraliste.* I saw a male brothel. A teacher of mine from Lawrenceville went in and I told myself there was syphilis there, so I didn't go in myself. In Fez I was excited to find that, with my beard and speaking French, I wasn't noticed. Invisibility! Dream of my life! But invisible as I was, open as I was, and I *was,* no adventure followed. No kif, no oboes, no tambourines, no Arab boy dancing naked in the *hammam.* Nothing I did brought me near to the thrills I knew were out there.

I flew to Salzburg to join Glenn Gould. I wanted to talk about music with Glenn, he wanted to talk about literature. I told him how pleased I was to be among German-speaking people, to be where all music tended to either Strauss or Mahler. I told him how thrilled I had been to see, when I went to hear Fischer-Dieskau sing the Brahms Magelone Lieder the night before, the same serious, prosperous audience I was used to seeing in New York. Most music-lovers I knew in New York refused to visit Austria, most musicians I knew wouldn't play there. "When people ask me if I'm Jewish," Glenn said, "I always tell them that I was Jewish during the war." And when they ask you if you're queer? Glenn said, "I always

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quote Horowitz, that there are three kinds of pianists: homosexual pianists, Jewish pianists, and bad pianists. And I add, pianists who play better than Horowitz."

I gave Glenn a story of mine and after he read it, he said something odd. The story had to do with an elevator operator in an apartment building. His father is a retired policeman. The elevator operator has fits of rage which he appeases by borrowing money. Every day after work he meets a loan shark named Malloy in a bar on Third Avenue. One day he learns that the loan shark has been murdered. His debts are canceled. But he can't remember where he was at the time of the crime. Did he murder Malloy? So he goes up to a friend of Malloy's in the bar and borrows money from him.

Glenn said, "If someone can write beautifully, why would he choose a subject like this?" I thought that was odd. Then he told me his favorite writers were W.H. Hudson, R.B. Cunninghame-Graham and John Cowper Powys; and I thought that that was still odder.

Here's a story of mine that Glenn did like. I told him of seeing Artur Rubinstein in a record store in Paris. He was buying a recording by Dinu Lipatti or William Kapell. He smiled at me and said, in mock self-deprecation, "I have so much to learn." Some months later I saw Rubinstein getting his hair cut at the St. Regis barbershop in New York. After his shampoo, his hair hung down from his bald head, and he looked like the homely old man he was. Then he took a comb from the barber and teased his hair up until he looked like Artur Rubinstein. "Ah, Maestro," said the barber as Rubinstein handed back the comb, "I have so much to learn."

Glenn and I agreed that later that summer he should come to Granja Amos. This never happened and soon after our friendship evaporated. I'd been too heated; that was why. I was always closing with men at that age and then drawing back abruptly. In my notebook I find from about this time the following quotation from Joyce; it's from his story "A Painful Case": "Love between man

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and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse."

Back in Málaga I waited for Sabina and read Henry Charles Lea's *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages.* In 1212 Raimond de Toulouse, the brave courtier and poet, wrote to a lady in Barcelona that he was coming for her sake to raise the siege of her city and rid her land of the foreign invader. The letter was intercepted by Simon de Montfort. He was the brutal Norman who commanded the forces sent by Innocent III to wipe out the Albigensians. He said, "God help me as much as I little fear one who comes for the sake of a woman to undo the work of God!" Alas, I thought, no one brutal will ever say something like that about me.

Sabina arrived and we drove from Málaga to San Sebastian and Barcelona and to the Camargue. I was happy and excited and forgot my jealousy. Next we drove to Tours and through the Loire Valley to Paris. Most of the places we drove to Sabina had been to before, but not Amboise. In Amboise I picked a fight. She was driving and I said turn right and she drove on, or I said drive on and she turned right. I tore the keys from the ignition and threw them out of the window. Why don't you listen to me! Why must I always do what *you* say! Why did you leave me alone! I got out and picked up the keys from the road. I was crying. I gave them back. I'm sorry, I said.

In Paris we checked into the France et Choiseul where I'd been told Alfred de Musset had once stayed with George Sand. Sabina showed me the place de Furstenberg. She had been lonely in Paris when she lived there some years before. If ever I think of the loneliness of a young woman alone in Paris, I see the place de Furstenberg. I bought Sabina scarves and soap. I took her to buy gloves. The *gantier* said that he'd never seen such small hands on a grown woman before. I met

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her friends at the cafés where she used to hang out. *Le Tournon, Le Flore.* I met the photographer. He was older than I expected, and not so droll. *Drôle* was their word. Sabina spoke rapidly with her friends. Idiomatically, I suppose. She said, "*Et elle était endimanchée: même les dimanches.* [She dressed in her Sunday best, even on Sunday.]" And everyone laughed. She took me to the old Romanesque church, St. Julien-le-pauvre. She took me to see a Gothic wood carving of the Magdalene at the Musée de Cluny. "They tell me she looks like me," she said. *They* tell her? Did she take me for a fool? All the same, from then on she looked different to me, especially when angry, or sad.

We drove from Paris by way of Arles to Florence where her parents were. It was exciting to be there openly with Sabina. We visited an old German woman who lived in a tower called Torre del Diablo. She had been the mistress of Ferruccio Busoni and she showed us some of his manuscript scores.

I drove from Florence to Vienna where my father was staying at the Sacher. He told me again I would soon have to earn my own living. "You're depleting your trust fund," he said. "You must find a way to *increment* your income." Sometimes he said, "You must find a way to *implement* your income." We looked at drawings at The Albertina and went to the opera to see *Fidelio.* I told him that young German couples went to *Fidelio* when they got engaged. I could not bring myself to tell him that now I wanted to marry Sabina. He would have said something about young men married to older women, about how they castrate them. He would have repeated, "Are you being fair to her?"

"How do you feel in Vienna?" I asked. My father and mother had often said they could never go to Germany or Austria. He was there because I'd insisted.

"I feel like Schnitzler's Anatol," he said with good humor. "I know the ropes." His allusion was to the Max and Anatol stories of Artur Schnitzler. Naïve Max and

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Anatol, man-of-the-world. And he said, "For the first time in history being Jewish is chic."

"Which makes it more dangerous surely?"

"*Not* if you know the ropes."

"Very droll," I said.

From Vienna I drove to Munich where Sabina was. We decided to get married in December in Germany. I gave her a wooden ring that I'd bought from a jeweller in London who'd told me it was Turkish. She went back to New York to tell her parents. Her best friend, LeeAnne, found me a room in Kaulbachstrasse, in Schwabing. Waiting for Sabina, I walked around Munich and looked at where, in Prinzregentstrasse, Hitler had lived with his young niece Geli Raubel, and where, after Geli Raubel committed suicide, Hitler became a vegetarian.

One afternoon there were police outside the Alte Pinakotek. A young man had destroyed a masterpiece in the museum, someone said. More police brought the young man out. The masterpiece was "The Descent of the Damned into Hell" by Rubens. I went into the museum and looked at where the young man had thrown acid on the painting. It was hard to see where, the painting is huge. It was also hard to see why. Many lewder paintings hung nearby. Some depicted more sacred scenes. The Rubens isn't lewd at all. My notion of desecration came from two stories: Mann's "*Gladius Dei*" and "Erostrate" by Jean-Paul Sartre; that is, from Savonarola and from the figure in antiquity who burned down the temple of Diana at Ephesus so as to be remembered for all time.

Sabina came back and we drove to Obersdorf to tell her godmother of our "betrothal." She played a yodel record for us and we all drank a toast. There was a photograph on the bookcase of a young man in a *Luftwaffe* uniform. It was her godmother's son-in-law, shot down over London and killed. He had been the son of Franz von Papen, one of Hitler's ministers. Her godmother was petty nobility.

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We drove back to Munich. It was night. There was fog. How very far I had come. Yodel records, the photograph of someone in a *Luftwaffe* uniform . . . . The trees on the road came up out of the fog. A big car passed us. The trees kept coming up fast. Then brilliant crystals lay on the road. The big car was smashed. A cyclist was lying on the road.

Before we got to Munich I told Sabina I wanted to wait. I tried to explain. I said, You see. But already Sabina was pushing the wooden ring into my hand.

Note: NOT HER REAL NAME. Sabina read these pages and demanded that her name be changed. I asked her what name she wanted. She didn't reply, so I chose Sabina (pronounced Sa-BEENA), Sabina (pronounced Sa-BYNA) having been the prettiest girl in my sixth-grade class. I thought of adding NHRN to every mention of Sabina, but that would have been vengeful. Francesca and LeeAnne are NRNs, neither of course is Hans Dreier.

It's curious how if you change someone's name in a memoir like this, you feel you have the license to invent a past and future for them; to invent new circumstances, too: children and dogs and vices and tastes, they stop at the Bristol instead of the Ritz, they drive Aston-Martins, not Delahayes . . . . Notwithstanding which, I've been as truthful as memory, tact and record permit.

The title comes from *The Taming of the Shrew*, III, ii: "I see a woman may be made a fool/ If she had not a spirit to resist."

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Two Poems by Diane Ackerman

Antarctica Offers Scott Her Lantern

I am so cold tonight. Lend me your fever
to mull my long pastures of crumbling ice.
Warm the jagged mountains in my spine
that now shiver with cold. I will lie still as statuary.
I will hang my white lantern across your gaze
so you may see it shining, feel its sudden glow,
use it to construe the dark corners of your life.
As you wade through my snowy limbs,
it will fill you with wonder. True, I will hurl you
hard against your nerve, till your colors flare
like an aurora in the open arms of the sky.

Has the spectrum shattered across the ice?
I see you walk through blue only—
a dim, narrow band. Once fluorescent with life,
you grow faint in dismal shadows.
Your temperature has taken flight
like a small Antarctic bird and begun circling
the cliff head, climbing higher and higher.
Your fever troubles me. I am afraid
your pulse may swerve, your passion waver,
deliriums gallop through your mind
like ghost ponies, and your brave heart stumble.
Beg me once again, and I will soothe your fever.
But if I press my cold palms to your face,
you will be mine forever.

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A Pilot's Pay

My love, who rides the black flanks of the night
on steel wings,
My love, whose sex is an inkwell, whose eyes are
caged birds,
My love, who yawns above cities feathered with soot,
and over jungles deadly as an arsenal,
My love, whose laugh is a peony walking a tightrope,
My love, who spins a radar net across the sky,
My love, whose hands are the fringed undulation of a
hawk
tilting calmly where only predators float,
My love, who sharpens the day on the carborundum
of his fear,
My love, whose palms are roadmaps, whose lips are a
dragonfly,
My love, who slays the wolves of inertia,
My love, who counts the loose sequins of city lights,
and the spiralling galaxies high above, on the same
abacus,
My love, who gallops through time and thunder,
while clouds spill over him bags of light,
My love, who meets his enemies in sleeves of armor,
My love, whose love is a ladder of fish hooks,
My love, who finds me a wild, iridescent thing of the
earth,
My love, who spreads open the loose skirts of the rain
so a wing may pass,
My love, whose feet are two panting ravens,
My love, who navigates by satellite and silo,
My love, who loves through Civil Evening Twilight,
My love, who lives by gasoline and starlight.

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Two Poems by Helena Kaminski

Face

Eye is late.
Got stopped in the a.m.
Got roughed up.
Had its camera smashed.
Rumored shot.
Rumored released.

Ear taped downtown, today.
But it's due back.
Just press "jungle" rewind and play.

Lip lies back on its unmade bed.
Don't shrug at me.
Where are they?

Eye took much shit.
Often, reporting back,
Got cut off before getting to the
Crux of what it saw.

Ear talented. Talented. Maybe bionic.
Dogs lined up for lessons.
The day eye played it its video
Of mouth yapping about "Life"
As a School for the
Deaf, ear burst, and underwent
A slow, shocked healing.

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Neighbours say
Things went on
That can't go on
Within a skull.

Why the waste
God why?

Mouth won
Because eye watched
Ear watch mouth
Bulldoze them both.
A writer wrote,
"This is where war turned civil."

Did the bush, grey with road dust
Kneel in near-defeat?
Did the sky mutter
Its crisis?

Don't remember.

Was mouth good or pretty
Bad? Was it

Don't remember.

Mouth, like Fidel
Spoke for five hours.

It's late.
It's very late.

Damn it.
Who's in charge?

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Lip lies back
Along the face,
Dazed body at the beach
On its pale towel.

Why aren't they
Where could

Ask mouth.
Mouth is boss.

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Who We Are

We leave the smears out.
In the morning there is often a surprise.

We signal for the trays.
The live scraps soon arrive.

Cat mat sat rat that hat
What hideous talent.

At level 10, we had a shock
The shock wore off.

Disaster is for amateurs.
We are the pros.

Far below our lab
Two doom-planes are about to bump.
Right now they scissor to a city.

Flynn is on top of it,
That beauty.

See Flynn and two trainees
Down in the muck up to their
Knees, looking for slur
In what the pilot may have read.
Tom found the proof
It was the pilot, no, it was the plane.
Good boy, said Flynn.

Star bar car oar jar far
It doesn't mean the pilot was on something slow.
It doesn't mean.

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We leave that to
Our sister lab in Lebo.

To be doublesure
They do things twice.
Then run things backwards to be nice.
Them and their monkeys.

"We tested the crew.
They tested clean."

Lebo on the news
Answering questions.

You buy a kit
You put the parts
On where they
Fit, you crazy glue
Them and you sit the parts
Get hard and stick

That isn't us.

We try to teach our scientists a science that is slow.

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Don Bogen

Thoroughbreds

Blood flares from the nostrils.
The lungs, the enormous watermelon bellows,
are lined with it.
Legs conduits,
heartstalks that throb with each pulse,
each leap into air and two-beat thump
back on earth.
Their genes are a careful proposition.
They carry their sires like totems
in their names.
Their blood is as stylized as a strut.
Veins push out a nest of tubes
to tunnel the meat,
branch like ivy stems beneath the drawn skin.
Nothing in nature reflects their taut poise.

In the boxes,
in the small rings with their necks enclasped by
wreaths,
they skitter, coltish, annoyed.
On the track, they glide.
Their rarefied lineage gives them fluidity.
Training sharpens the point.
In the dust and rumble of the furious brief loop
their purpose may seem blurred.
The curt whip speaks to them.
Their flanks are an argument with friction,
the structure of their haunches
an investment.
Robed in shining blankets,
they wait like fabulous emissaries from another world.
The heart lifts with their promise.
Windows slam at their start.

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Theodore Weiss

A Foreign Tongue

I

A different tongue, you think,
would set you free. Imagine songs
you, disabused of old entanglements,
might sing. But only out of mastery;
you must belong to one another.

Still it may be ignorance enjoys
advantages as well, a freedom
all its own.
Early on, innocent
of French, were you not charmed by
Mallarmé, his colors, deft as silken
clouds, an incense, high above
the daily stench?
You, better
off than those inhabitants baffled
by knowledge, furled out yet another
veil upon those veils on veils
that Mallarmé disposed.
So you
were happy, those first carefree days
on the rue de Fleurus, translating
Baudelaire at sight.

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II

And yet a little
learning can take you a long way,
the way your good friends felt
living in Rome:
as if, they come
a great distance, this world,
going on for centuries, had all
that time been rehearsing for them,
hoarding pelf, accomplishments,
tumultuously displayed, one street
leaped across to another epoch.

Even the particles swept up
from countless ruins, what else
but traces racing on, a multitude,
of golden, winged feet—the lasting,
momentary heroes, monsters, gods.

III

But, no, as your friends,
time passed, could have told
you, it's not exactly paradise,
not exactly the triumph in which,
from Cleopatra to the latest cats,
the whole glorious story passes by
and every day for your amusement.

Every day you bump into things—
acts too—like words you cannot
understand, hardest of all
since so nebulous.
May it not be
a rush of bodies, furies loose,
stark hungers jarring hungers,
crammed in every syllable?
The time
arrives when you indeed feel free,
manically free of everything.

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IV

Step outside. Incessant screech.
The Vespas sputtering, tourist buses—
gas fumes mixed with cat and human
piss, confused with dust swirled up
from charging chariots—plunge by
refusing to believe that you exist.

Its aqueducts become the Maxima
Cloaca, the river shows you here
a scummy froth, there a moldering
debris, you wiped out by grimacing
faces piled on faces.
Beggars first,
then flocks of black-frocked priests,
swooped down, see you nothing
more than carrion, to be fleeced
and fed on past their local sheep.

V

At least the first estrangement
was your own, one you could feel
at home with not being at home,
the world solidly against you.
Its tongue, often betraying you,
still filled your mouth with honey.

VI

In the night the city shifting
its river, railroads, avenues,
the churches, squares, and fountains
seen in a different, glaring light,
how will you ever find your way

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among its shady slums, its reeking
butcheries, the uproarious centuries
this world has been going on?

Its words sidling by, con men,
gamblers, dandies, pimps, this grande
dame (a tart?), so artfully veiled,
do they greet or would they lead
astray?
This way the voice at its core,
much more clearly than your mother
tongue, declares a basic truth:
the terrible tenderness long ages
waiting there,
through bloody crimes
and ghosts—yourself a ghost just
passing by—lost in the luminous air,
released to you, become that peace
past understanding.

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GATSBY
INTRO
1

Introduction

It is reasonable to assert that Jay Gatsby is the major literary character of the United States in the Twentieth Century. No single figure created by Faulkner or Hemingway, or by our other dramatists, is as central a presence in our national mythology as Gatsby. There are few living Americans, of whatever gender, race, ethnic origin, or social class, who do not have at least a little touch of Gatsby in them. Whatever the American Dream has become, its truest contemporary representative remains Jay Gatsby, at once a gangster and a Romantic idealist, and above all a victim of his own High Romantic, Keatsian dream of love. Like his creator, Scott Fitzgerald, Gatsby is the American hero of romance, a vulnerable quester whose fate has the aesthetic dignity the romance mode at its strongest. Gatsby is neither pathetic nor tragic, because as a quester he meets his appropriate fate, which is to die still lacking in the knowledge that would destroy the spell of his enchantment. His death preserves his greatness, and justifies the title of his story, a title that is anything but ironic.

Gatsby, dream-eager yet deserving a perfect love, or perhaps dream-eager just

A manuscript page from the introduction to Major Literary Characters: Gatsby, *edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom.*

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Harold Bloom

The Art of Criticism I

Lately, Harold Bloom has been under attack not just in scholarly journals and colloquia, but also in newspapers, on the op-ed page, on television and radio. The barrage is due to the best-seller, The Book of J, *in which Bloom argues that the J-Writer, the putative first author of the Hebrew Bible, not only existed (a matter under debate among Bible historians for the last century) but, quite specifically, was a woman who belonged to the Solomonic elite and wrote during the reign of Rehoboam of Judah in competition with the Court Historian. The attacks have come from Bible scholars, rabbis, and journalists, as well*

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as from the usual academic sources, and Bloom has never been more isolated in his views or more secure in them. He has become, by his own description, "a tired, sad, humane old creature," who greets his many friends and detractors with an endearing, melancholy exuberance.

He is happy to talk about most anything—politics, romance, sports—although he admits he is "too used to" some topics to get into them. One sets out to disagree with him, and the response is, "Oh, no, no, my dear. . . ." In a class on Shakespeare, a mod-dressed graduate student suggests that Iago may be sexually jealous of Othello; Bloom tilts his furry eyebrows, his stocking feet crossed underneath him, his hand tucked in his shirt, and cries out, "That will not do, my dear. I must protest!" Not surprisingly, it is by now a commonplace of former students' articles and lectures to start off with a quarrel with Bloom, and, in his view, this is only as it should be. He likes to quote the Emersonian adage: "That which I can gain from another is never tuition but only provocation."

Born in New York City on July 11, 1930, the son of Russian and Polish immigrants, Harold Bloom attended the Bronx High School of Science, where he did poorly, and Cornell, where he finished at the top of his class. After spending a year at Pembroke College, Cambridge as a Research Fellow, and receiving a Ph.D. in English from Yale in 1955, he joined the Yale faculty and has remained there ever since. No critic in the English language since Samuel Johnson has been more prolific. Aside from providing the introductions to some five hundred volumes in the Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism, of which he is General Editor, he has written over twenty books. The best known: The Visionary Company *(1961) helped restore English Romantic poetry to the canon and to the syllabi of college courses in literature. Part of a tetralogy,* The Anxiety of Influence *(1973) attempts to redefine poetic tradition as a series of willful "misreadings" on the part of "strong," ephebe poets, of their precursors. Taking its title from the Greek word for struggle,* Agon *(1982) further explores the subject of influence and originality and provides some illustrations.* Ruin the Sacred Truths *(1989) looks broadly at the continuities and*

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discontinuities of the western tradition, from the Bible to Beckett, insisting that the distinction between sacred and secular literature is a wholly societal one, with no literary consequences whatsoever: from a literary standpoint, the Bible can be no more sacred than Beckett. Poetics of Influence *(1988), edited with an introduction by John Hollander, provides a fine selection of Bloom's work.*

Among other prizes, Bloom has received a MacArthur Grant and the Christian Gauss Award for the best book of literary criticism (Ruin the Sacred Truths). *He has spent sabbaticals teaching at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, the Universities of Rome and Bologna, and, most recently, giving the Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr College. Simultaneously residing at Yale and at Harvard, where Bloom was Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry in 1987, was, in some sense, a warm-up for his current act: twin appointments as Sterling Professor of the Humanities at Yale (he broke with the English Department there in 1977) and Berg Professor of English at New York University.*

*The interview was conducted at the homes he shares with his wife, Jeanne, in New Haven and New York—the one filled with four decades' accrual of furniture and books, the other nearly bare, although stacks of works-in-progress and students' papers are strewn about in both. If the conversation is not too heavy, Bloom likes to have music on, sometimes Baroque, sometimes jazz. (His New York apartment, which is in Greenwich Village, allows him to take in more live jazz.) The phone rings non-stop. Friends, former students, colleagues drop by. Talk is punctuated by strange exclamatories: "Zoombah," for one—Swahili for "libido"—is an all-purpose flavoring particle, with the accompanying, adjectival "zoombinatious" and the verb "to zoombinate." Bloom speaks as if the sentences came to him off a printed page, grammatically complex, at times tangled. But they are delivered with great animation, whether ponderous or joyful—if also with finality. Because he learned English by reading it, his accent is very much his own, with some New York inflections: "*You *try and learn English in an all Yiddish household in the East Bronx by sounding out the words of*

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Blake's Prophecies,*" he explains. Often, he will start a conversation with a direct, at times personal question, or a sigh: "Oh, how the Bloomian feet ache today!"*

INTERVIEWER

What are your memories of growing up?

HAROLD BLOOM

That was such a long time ago. I'm sixty years old. I can't remember much of my childhood that well. I was raised in an Orthodox East European Jewish household where Yiddish was the everyday language. My mother was very pious, my father less so. I still read Yiddish poetry. I have a great interest and pleasure in it.

INTERVIEWER

What are your recollections of the neighborhood in which you grew up?

BLOOM

Almost none. One of my principal memories is that I and my friends, just to survive, had constantly to fight street battles with neighborhood Irish toughs, some of whom were very much under the influence of a sort of Irish-American Nazi Organization called the Silver Shirts. This was back in the 1930s. We were on the verge of an Irish neighborhood over there in the East Bronx. We lived in a Jewish neighborhood. On our border, somewhere around Southern Boulevard, an Irish neighborhood began, and they would raid us, and we would fight back. They were terrible street fights, involving broken bottles and baseball bats. They were very nasty times. I say this even though I've now grown up and find that many of my best friends are Irish.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you think your background helped in any way to shape your career?

BLOOM

Obviously it predisposed me towards a great deal of systematic reading. It exposed me to the Bible as a sort of definitive text early on. And obviously too, I became obsessed with interpretation as such. Judaic tradition necessarily acquaints one with interpretation as a mode. Exegesis becomes wholly natural. But I did not have very orthodox religious beliefs. Even when I was quite a young child I was very skeptical indeed about orthodox notions of spirituality. Of course, I now regard normative Judaism as being, as I've often said, a very strong misreading of the Hebrew Bible undertaken in the second century in order to meet the needs of the Jewish people in a Palestine under Roman occupation. And that is not very relevant to matters eighteen centuries later. But otherwise, I think the crucial experiences for me as a reader, as a child, did not come reading the Hebrew Bible. It came in reading poetry written in English, which can still work on me with the force of a Bible conversion. It was the aesthetic experience of first reading Hart Crane and William Blake—those two poets in particular.

INTERVIEWER

How old were you at this point?

BLOOM

I was preadolescent, ten or eleven years old. I still remember the extraordinary delight, the extraordinary force that Crane and Blake brought to me (in particular Blake's rhetoric in the longer poems) though I had no notion what they were about. I picked up a copy of the *Collected Poems* of Hart Crane in the Bronx Library. I still remember when I lit upon the page with the extraor-

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dinary trope, "O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits / The agile precincts of the lark's return." I was just swept away by it, by the Marlovian rhetoric. I still have the flavor of that book in me. Indeed it's the first book I ever owned. I begged my oldest sister to give it to me, and I still have the old black and gold edition she gave me for my birthday back in 1942. It's up on the third floor. Why is it you can have that extraordinary experience (preadolescent in my case as in so many other cases) of falling violently in love with great poetry . . . where you are moved by its power before you comprehend it? In some, a version of the poetical character is incarnated and in some like myself the answering voice is from the beginning that of the critic. I suppose the only poet of the twentieth century that I could secretly set above Yeats and Stevens would be Hart Crane. Crane was dead at the age of thirty-two, so one doesn't really know what he would have been able to do. An immense loss. As large a loss as the death of Shelley at twenty-nine or Keats at twenty-five. Crane had to do it all in only seven or eight years.

INTERVIEWER

Did you read children's stories, fairy tales?

BLOOM

I don't think so. I read the Bible, which is, after all, a long fairy tale. I didn't read children's literature until I was an undergraduate.

INTERVIEWER

Did you write verse as a child?

BLOOM

In spite of my interest, that never occurred to me. It must have had something to do with the enormous reverence and rapture I felt about poetry, the incantatory strength that Crane and Blake had for me from the beginning. To be a poet did not occur to me. It was indeed a

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threshold guarded by demons. To try to write in verse would have been a kind of trespass. That's something that I still feel very strongly.

INTERVIEWER

How was your chosen career viewed by your family?

BLOOM

I don't think they had any idea what I would be. I think they were disappointed. They were Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe with necessarily narrow views. They had hoped that I would be a doctor or a lawyer or a dentist. They did not know what a Professor of Poetry was. They would have understood, I suppose, had I chosen to be a rabbi or a Talmudic scholar. But finally, I don't think they cared one way or the other.

When I was a small boy already addicted to doing nothing but reading poems in English, I was asked by an uncle who kept a candy store in Brooklyn what I intended to do to earn a living when I grew up. I said I want to read poetry. He told me that there were professors of poetry at Harvard and Yale. That's the first time I'd ever heard of those places or that there was such a thing as a professor of poetry. In my five- or six-year-old way I replied, "I'm going to be a professor of poetry at Harvard or Yale." Of course, the joke is that three years ago I was simultaneously Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard and Sterling Professor of the Humanities at Yale! So in that sense I was prematurely overdetermined in profession. Sometimes I think that is the principal difference between my own work and the work of many other critics. I came to it very early, and I've been utterly unswerving.

INTERVIEWER

You are known as someone who has had a prodigious memory since childhood. Do you find that your power of recall was triggered by the words themselves, or were there other factors?

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BLOOM

Oh no, it was immediate and it was always triggered by text, and indeed always had an aesthetic element. I learned early that a test for a poem for me was whether it seemed so inevitable that I could remember it perfectly from the start. I think the only change in me in that regard has come mainly under the influence of Nietzsche. It is the single way he has influenced me aesthetically. I've come to understand that the quality of memorability and inevitability which I assumed came from intense pleasure may actually have come from a kind of pain. That is to say that one learns from Nietzsche that there is something painful about meaning. Sometimes it is the pain of difficulty, sometimes the pain of being set a standard that one cannot attain.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever feel that reading so much was an avoidance of experience?

BLOOM

No. It was for me a terrible rage or passion which was a drive. It was fiery. It was an absolute obsession. I do not think that speculation on my own part would ever convince me that it was an attempt to substitute a more ideal existence for the life that I had to live. It was love. I fell desperately in love with reading poems. I don't think that one should idealize such a passion. I certainly no longer do. I mean, I still love reading a poem when I can find a really good one to read. Just recently, I was sitting down, alas for the first time in several years, reading through Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* at one sitting. I found it to be an astonishing experience, powerful and superb. That hasn't dimmed or diminished. But surely it is a value in itself, a reality in its own right; surely it cannot be reduced or subsumed under some other name. Freud, doubtless, would wish to reduce it to the sexual thought, or rather, the sexual past. But increasingly it

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seems to me that literature, and particularly Shakespeare, who is literature, is a much more comprehensive mode of cognition than psychoanalysis can be.

INTERVIEWER

Who are the teachers who were important to you? Did you study with the New Critics at Yale?

BLOOM

I did not study with any of the New Critics, with the single exception being William K. Wimsatt. Bill was a formalist and a very shrewd one, and from the moment I landed in the first course that I took with him, which was in theories of poetry, he sized me up. His comment on my first essay for him was, "This is Longinian criticism. You're an instance of exactly what I don't like or want." He was quite right. He was an Aristotelian; as far as I was concerned, Aristotle had ruined Western literary criticism almost from the beginning. What I thought of as literary criticism really *did* begin with the pseudo-Longinus. So we had very strong disagreements about that kind of stuff. But he was a remarkable teacher. We became very close friends later on. I miss him very much. He was a splendid, huge, fascinating man, almost seven feet tall, a fierce, dogmatic, Roman Catholic, very intense. But very fair-minded. We shared a passion for Dr. Samuel Johnson. I reacted so violently against him that antithetically he was a great influence on me. I think that's what I meant by dedicating *The Anxiety of Influence* to Bill. I still treasure the note he wrote me after I gave him one of the early copies of the book. "I find the dedication extremely surprising," he said, and then added mournfully: "I suppose it entitles you to be Plotinus to Emerson's Plato in regard to American neo-Romanticism, a doctrine that I despise." Oh, yes, we had serious differences in our feelings about poetry.

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INTERVIEWER

What were your earliest essays like?

BLOOM

I don't think I wrote any essays until I was an undergraduate at Cornell. But then a few years ago Bob Elias, one of my teachers there, sent me an essay I had written on Hart Crane (which I had completely forgotten about) when I was a Cornell freshman of sixteen or seventeen. I couldn't get myself to read it. I even destroyed it. I shouldn't have. I should have waited until I could bear to look at it. I'm very curious as to what kind of thing it was.

INTERVIEWER

Are there other literary figures who were important to you early on?

BLOOM

A real favorite among modern critics, and the one I think influenced me considerably, though no one ever wants to talk about him, was George Wilson Knight. He was an old friend. Utterly mad. He made Kenneth Burke and Harold Bloom look placid and mild. George died quite old. He was very interested in spiritualism, and in survival after death. He told me a couple of times that he believed it quite literally. There is a moment in *The Christian Renaissance* which I think is the finest moment in modern criticism, because it is the craziest. He is citing a spiritualist, F.W.H. Myers, and he quotes something that Myers wrote and published, and then he quotes something from a seance at which Myers "came back" and said something through a medium, this astonishing sentence, which I give to you verbatim: "These quotations from F.W.H. Myers, so similar in style, composed before and after his own earthly 'death,' contain together a wisdom which our era may find it hard to assimilate."

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I mean, perfectly straight about it! But the early books of Wilson Knight are very fine indeed—certainly one of the most considerable figures of twentieth century criticism, though he's mostly forgotten now.

At this point we wander into the kitchen, where Mrs. Bloom is watching the evening news.

BLOOM

Now let's wait for the news about this comeback for the wretched Yankees. I've been denouncing them. They haven't won since 1979. That's ten years and they're not going to win this year. They're terrible . . . What's this?

TV: THE YANKEES WITH THEIR MOST DRAMATIC WIN OF THE YEAR THIS AFTERNOON . . . AND THE TIGERS LOST AGAIN.

BLOOM

Oh my God! That means we're just four games out. How very up-cheering.

MRS. BLOOM

Jessica Hahn.

BLOOM

Jessica Hahn is back!

TV: . . . HIRED ON AS AN ON-AIR PERSONALITY AT A TOP 40 RADIO STATION IN PHOENIX.

BLOOM

How marvelous!

TV: PLAYBOY MAGAZINE HAS COUNTED ON HAHN TO COME THROUGH. SHE APPEARED NUDE IN A RECENT ISSUE.

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BLOOM

Splendid . . . Let us start again, Antonio. What were we talking about?

We return to the living room.

INTERVIEWER

We were talking about your teachers and I was going to ask about the poets you've known over the years.

BLOOM

Auden I knew pretty well, mostly through John Hollander. Eliot I never met. Stevens I met just once. I was still a Cornell undergraduate. I came up to Yale to hear him read the shorter version of "Ordinary Evening in New Haven." It was the first time I was ever in New Haven or at Yale for that matter. I got to talk to him afterwards. It was a formidable experience meeting him. We talked about Shelley, and he quoted a stanza of the "Witch of Atlas" to me, which impressed me. "Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is," it starts. It's a chilly, rather beautiful poem. Robert Penn Warren and I were close friends. Miss Bishop was of that younger generation also. Archie Ammons and I are very close. There are quite a few others. Sometimes I used to correspond with James Merrill when he was writing *The Changing Light at Sandover.* He kept sending parts to me as it went along, and I kept writing him letters saying "can't we have more J.M. and less of this stuff in capital letters?" He said this was the way it had to be, this was the way it was actually coming to him. I realized I was going against my cardinal rule, which is don't argue with it, just appreciate it.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any authors you'd like to have known, but haven't?

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BLOOM

No. I should like to have known fewer authors than I have known, which is to say nothing against all my good friends.

INTERVIEWER

Because it interferes with an honest assessment?

BLOOM

No. It's just that as one gets older, one is doomed, in this profession, to know personally more and more authors. Most of them are in fact quite nice ladies and gentlemen, but they have trouble—even one's very close friends—talking to the tired, sad, humane old creature that one is. They seem to be more conscious of one's profession as literary critic than one is necessarily conscious of their profession as novelist or poet.

INTERVIEWER

Are there characters you would like to have known?

BLOOM

No, no. The only person I would like to have known, whom I have never known, but it's just as well, is Sophia Loren. I have been in love with Sophia Loren for at least a third of a century. But undoubtedly it would be better never to meet her. I'm not sure I ever shall, though my late friend Bart Giamatti had breakfast with her. Judging by photographs and recent film appearances, she has held up quite well, though a little too slender now—no longer the same gorgeous Neapolitan beauty, now a much more sleek beauty.

INTERVIEWER

Could you give us your opinion of some novelists? We could start with Norman Mailer.

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BLOOM

Oh, I have written on Norman a lot. I reviewed *Ancient Evenings* at some length in the *New York Review of Books* and I came forth with a sentence that did not please Norman which I'm still proud of. It was, "Subscribers to the Literary Guild will find in it more than enough humbuggery and bumbuggery to give them their money's worth." I had counted up the number of homosexual and heterosexual bumbuggeries; I was rather impressed by the total, including, unless I misremember, at one point the protagonist or perhaps it was the god-king successfully bumbuggering the lion. But then Norman is immensely inventive in this regard. He told me the last time I saw him that he is completing a manuscript of several thousand pages on the CIA. That should be an amazing nightmare of a book since Norman's natural grand paranoid vision is one of *everything's* being a conspiracy. So I should think that might be very interesting indeed. What can one say? Mailer is an immense imaginative energy. One is not persuaded that in the sheer mode of the fantastic, he has found his proper mètier. Beyond a doubt his most impressive single book is *The Executioner's Song,* and that is, of course, very close indeed to a transcript of what we want to call reality. So it's rather ironic that Norman should be more effective in the mode of Theodore Dreiser, giving us a kind of contemporary *American Tragedy* or *Sister Carrie* in the *Executioner's Song* than in the modes he himself has wanted to excel in. I would think that he is likely to impress future literary historians as having been a knowing continuator of Dreiser, which is not an inconsiderable achievement.

INTERVIEWER

And William Gaddis?

BLOOM

Like everyone else, I've never gotten over *The Recognitions,* but I differ from those who have found the other

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two books worthy of him. I have had great difficulty working my way through them. I assume that there is more to be heard from him, but I am afraid that he is an instance of someone who in that vast initial anatomy of a book, to use Mister Frye's phrase for that kind of fictional writing, seems to have surpassed himself at the start . . . which is, of course, in the famous American tradition.

INTERVIEWER

And Saul Bellow?

BLOOM

He's an enormous pleasure but he does not make things difficult enough for himself or for us. Like many others, I would commend him for the almost Dickensian exuberance of his minor male characters who have carried every one of his books. The central protagonist, always being some version of himself, even in *Henderson,* is invariably an absurd failure, and the women, as we all know, are absurdities; they are third-rate pipe-dreams. The narrative line is of no particular interest. His secular opinions are worthy of Allan Bloom, who seems to derive from them. And I'm not an admirer of the "other Bloom," as is well known. In general, Bellow seems to me an immensely wasted talent though he certainly would not appreciate my saying so. I would oppose to him a most extraordinary talent: Philip Roth. It does seem to me that Philip Roth goes from strength to strength and is at the moment startlingly unappreciated. It seems strange to say Philip is unappreciated when he has so wide a readership and so great a notoriety, but *Deception* was not much remarked upon and it's an extraordinary tour-de-force.

INTERVIEWER

It was seen as an experiment or a sort of a leftover from—

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BLOOM

From *The Counterlife.* Well, *The Counterlife,* of course, deserved the praise that it received. It's an astonishing book, though I would put it a touch below the *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy with its marvelous Prague Orgy postlude or coda. I still think *My Life as a Man* as well as, of course, *Portnoy's Complaint* are remarkable books. There's the great episode of Kafka's whore in *The Professor of Desire.* I've written a fair amount about Philip. After a rather unfortunate personal book called *The Facts,* which I had trouble getting through, he has written a book about his late father called *Patrimony,* which is both beautiful and immensely moving, a real achievement. The man is a prose artist of great accomplishment. He has immense narrative exuberance, and also—I would insist upon this—since it's an extremely difficult thing, as we all know, to write successful humorous fiction and, though the laughter Philip evokes is very painful indeed, he is an authentic comic novelist. I'm not sure at the moment that we have any other authentic comic novelist of the first order.

INTERVIEWER

You have written that poetry is in an especially strong stage now. Is the same true of fiction?

BLOOM

Although I've been reading extensively and writing about it over the last few years, it's very difficult for me to get a steady fix on the current kaleidoscope of American fiction. Our most distinguished living writer of narrative fiction—I don't think you would quite call him a novelist—is Thomas Pynchon, and yet that recent book *Vineland* was a total disaster. In fact, I cannot think of a comparable disaster in modern American fiction. To have written the great story of Byron the lightbulb in *Gravity's Rainbow,* to have written *The Crying of Lot 49* and then to give us this piece of sheer ineptitude, this

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hopelessly hollow book which I read through in amazement and disbelief and which has not got in it a redeeming sentence, hardly a redeeming phrase, is immensely disheartening.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any response to the essay Tom Wolfe wrote urging the big, Victor Hugo-like novel?

BLOOM

He is, of course, praising his own *Bonfire of the Vanities,* which is a wholly legitimate thing for an essayist-turned-novelist to do. But with all honor to Tom Wolfe, a most amiable fellow and a former classmate of mine at Yale, and as someone who enjoyed reading *The Bonfire of the Vanities,* I found very little difference between it and his books of essays. He has merely taken his verve and gift for writing the journalistic essay and moved it a little further over the edge; but the characters are names on the page—he does not try to make them more than that. The social pressure is extraordinarily and vividly conveyed. But he's always been remarkable for that. He's still part of that broad movement which has lifted a particular kind of high-pitched journalism into a realm that may very nearly be aesthetic. On the other hand, I must say I would rather reread *The Bonfire of the Vanities* than reread another Rabbit volume by Mister Updike. But then Mister Updike and I, we are not a mutual admiration society.

INTERVIEWER

Have you had run-ins with friends or writers whose books you've reviewed?

BLOOM

I wouldn't say run-ins exactly. Mister Styron, who has, of course, his difficulties and I sympathize with them, once at Robert Penn Warren's dinner table, when I

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dared to disagree with him on a question of literary judgement, spoke up and said, "Your opinion doesn't matter, you are only a schoolteacher," which still strikes me as perhaps the most memorable single thing that has been said to me by any contemporary novelist. I felt that Warren's poetry was greatly preferable to his recent novels, and was trying to persuade Red to stop writing novels. *A Place to Come to,* which Red to his dying day thought was a novel of the eminence of *World Enough and Time, At Heaven's Gate, All the King's Men,* and *Night Rider,* is a stillborn book and a terrible bore, though I say that with great sadness. Whereas Red Warren's poetry from the *Incarnations* in 1966 down to the end (he stopped writing poetry in the last few years because he was too ill) was consistently the work of a great poet.

INTERVIEWER

Are there younger writers you enjoy reading?

BLOOM

I like this fellow Ted Mooney. I think something is going on there. *Traffic and Laughter,* which I've just read through, certainly has éclat; it certainly has a lot of intensity. I don't know; there are so many that it is difficult to choose among them. It's easier on the whole these days to think of poets than novelists. It's very difficult for a novelist to break through. The form is not showing a great deal of fecundity, except perhaps in Don Delillo, who is a superb inventor.

INTERVIEWER

What direction do you see the form taking?

BLOOM

I would suppose that in America we are leaning more and more towards terrible millennial visions. I would expect a religious dimension, a satiric dimension, an even

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more apocalyptic dimension than we have been accustomed to. I would expect the mode of fantasy to develop new permutations.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that fiction—or poetry for that matter—could ever die out?

BLOOM

I'm reminded of that great trope of Stevens's in "The Auroras of Autumn," when he speaks of a "Great shadow's last embellishment." There's always a further embellishment. It looks like a last embellishment and then it turns out not to be—yet once more, and yet once more. One is always saying farewell to it, it is always saying farewell to itself, and then it perpetuates itself. One is always astonished and delighted. When I introduced John Ashbery, at one of the poetry readings in the old days at Yale, I heard, for the first time, "Wet Casements." How it ravished my heart away the moment I heard it! Certainly when I recite that poem to myself and remember the original experience of hearing him deliver it, it's hard to see how any poem could be more adequate. Clearly it is not a diminished or finished art form as long as a poem like "Wet Casements" is still possible.

INTERVIEWER

I wanted to ask you about a period of time in the mid-sixties, which you have described as a period of great upheaval and transition for you. You were immersed in the essays of Emerson.

BLOOM

Yes, I started reading him all day long, every day, and pretty much simultaneously reading Freud. People would look at me with amazement, and say, "Well, what about Thoreau? He at least counts for something." And

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I would look back at them in amazement and tell them what indeed was and is true, that Thoreau is deeply derivative of Emerson, and very minor compared to him. Emerson is God.

INTERVIEWER

You were in analysis during this period. How did that go?

BLOOM

As my distinguished analyst said to me at the end, there had never been a proper transference.

INTERVIEWER

You were unable to accept his authority?

BLOOM

I thought and still think that he is a very nice man, but as he wryly remarked, I was paying him to give him lectures several times a week on the proper way to read Freud. He thought this was quite self-defeating for both of us.

INTERVIEWER

Can a successful therapy ever be so closely allied to a reading of Freud?

BLOOM

I take it that a successful therapy is an oxymoron.

INTERVIEWER

It's always interminable?

BLOOM

I do not know anyone who has ever benefitted from Freudian or any other mode of analysis, except by being, to use the popular trope for it, so badly shrunk, that they

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become quite dried out. That is to say, all passion spent. Perhaps they become better people, but they also become stale and uninteresting people with very few exceptions. Like dried-out cheese, or wilted flowers.

INTERVIEWER

Were you worried about losing your creativity?

BLOOM

No, no. That was not the issue at all.

INTERVIEWER

You were having trouble writing at the time.

BLOOM

Oh yes. I was having all kinds of crises. I was, in every sense, "in the middle of the journey." On the other hand, this has been recurrent. Here I am sixty years old and as much as ever I'm in the middle of the journey. That is something that goes with the territory. One just keeps going.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see yourself as a difficult critic, in the sense that you qualify certain poets and prose fiction writers as "difficult?"

BLOOM

I would think, my dear, that most people these days might be kind enough to call me difficult. The younger members of my profession and the members of what I have called the School of Resentment describe me, I gather, as someone who partakes of a cult of personality or self-obsession rather than their wonderful, free and generous social vision. One of them, I understand, refers to me customarily as "Napoleon Bonaparte." There is no way of dealing with these people. They have not been

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moved by literature. Many of them are my former students and I know them all too well. They are now gender and power freaks.

But, no. *The Anxiety of Influence* is a difficult book. So is *Kabbalah and Criticism.* They're books in which one is trying to discover something. But *Ruin the Sacred Truths* is a very different book from these earlier ones, a very simple book, to me quite transparent. Besides the aging process, and I hope the maturing process, the major reason is that I am writing more for that Johnsonian ideal (which, of course, does not exist any more)—the Common Reader. I wouldn't dream of using a too technical word or term now if I could possibly help it, and I don't think there are any in *Ruin the Sacred Truths* except for "facticity." I use that term and then dismiss it. I don't think that any of my own special vocabulary, for which I have been so much condemned in the past (and which was meant to expose how arbitrary all critical and rhetorical terminology always is and has to be) is in that book. Nor do I think it's necessary to have read *Kabbalah and Criticism* or *A Map of Misreading* or any other to understand the book. It is general literary criticism.

INTERVIEWER

How do you account historically for the "School of Resentment?"

BLOOM

In the universities, the most surprising and reprehensible development came some twenty years ago, around 1968, and has had a very long-range effect, one that is still percolating. Suddenly all sorts of people, faculty members at the universities, graduate and undergraduate students, began to blame the universities not just for their own palpable ills and malfeasances, but for all the ills of history and society. They were blamed, and to some extent still are, by the budding School of Resentment and its precursors, as though they were not only representa-

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tive of these ills, but, weirdly enough, as though they had somehow helped *cause* these ills, and even more weirdly, quite surrealistically, as though they were somehow capable of ameliorating these ills. It's still going on—this attempt to ascribe both culpability and apocalyptic potential to the universities. It's really asking the universities to take the place that was once occupied by religion, philosophy and science. These are our conceptual modes. They have all failed us. The entire history of Western culture, from Alexandrian days until now, shows that when a society's conceptual modes fail it, then willy-nilly it becomes a literary culture. This is probably neither good nor bad, but just the way things become. And we can't really ask literature, or the representatives of a literary culture, in or out of the university, to save society. Literature is not an instrument of social change or an instrument for social reform. It is more a mode of human sensations and impressions, which do not reduce very well to societal rules or forms.

INTERVIEWER

How does one react to the School of Resentment? By declaring oneself an aesthete?

BLOOM

Well, I do that now, of course, in furious reaction to their School and to so much other pernicious nonsense that goes on. I would certainly see myself as an aesthete in the sense advocated by Ruskin, indeed to a considerable degree by Emerson, and certainly by the divine Walter and the sublime Oscar. It is a very engaged kind of mode. Literary criticism in the United States increasingly is split between very low level literary journalism and what I increasingly regard as a disaster, which is literary criticism in the academies, particularly in the younger generations. Increasingly scores and scores of graduate students have read the absurd Lacan but have never read Edmund Spenser; or have read a great deal of Foucault

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or Derrida but scarcely read Shakespeare or Milton. That's obviously an absurd defeat for literary study. When I was a young man, back in the fifties, starting out on what was to be my career, I used to proclaim that my chosen profession seemed to consist of a secular clergy or clerisy. I was thinking, of course, of the highly Anglo-Catholic New Criticism under the sponsorship or demi-godness of T.S. Eliot. But I realized in latish middle age, that, no better or worse, I was surrounded by a pride of displaced social workers, a rabblement of lemmings, all rushing down to the sea carrying their subject down to destruction with them. The School of Resentment is an extraordinary sort of melange of latest-model feminists, Lacanians, that whole semiotic cackle, latest-model pseudo-Marxists, so-called New Historicists, who are neither new nor historicist, and third generation deconstructors, who I believe have no relationship whatever to literary values. It's really a very paltry kind of a phenomenon. But it is pervasive, and it seems to be waxing rather than waning. It is a very rare thing indeed to encounter one critic, academic or otherwise, not just in the English speaking world, but also in France or Italy, who has an authentic commitment to aesthetic values, who reads for the pleasure of reading, and who values poetry or story as such, above all else. Reading has become a very curious kind of activity. It has become tendentious in the extreme. A sheer deliquescence has taken place because of this obsession with method or supposed method. Criticism starts—it *has* to start—with a real passion for reading. It can come in adolescence, even in your twenties, but you must fall in love with poems. You must fall in love with what we used to call "imaginative literature." And when you are in love in that way, with or without provocation from good teachers, you will pass on to encountering what used to be called the sublime. And as soon as you do this, you pass into the agonistic mode, even if your own nature is anything but agonistic. In the end, the spirit that makes one a fan of a particular athlete

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or a particular team is different only in degree, not in kind, from the spirit that teaches one to prefer one poet to another, or one novelist to another. That is to say there is some element of competition at every point in one's experience as a reader. How could there not be? Perhaps you learn this more fully as you get older, but in the end you choose between books, or you choose between poems, the way you choose between people. You can't become friends with every acquaintance you make, and I would not think that it is any different with what you read.

INTERVIEWER

Do you forsee any change, or improvement, in critical fashions?

BLOOM

I don't believe in myths of decline or myths of progress, even as regards the literary scene. The world does not get to be a better or a worse place; it just gets more senescent. The world gets older, without getting either better or worse and so does literature. But I do think that the drab current phenomenon that passes for literary studies in the university will finally provide its own corrective. That is to say, sooner or later, students and teachers are going to get terribly bored with all the technocratic social work going on now. There will be a return to aesthetic values and desires, or these people will simply do something else with their time. But I find a great deal of hypocrisy in what they're doing now. It is tiresome to be encountering myths called "The Social Responsibility of the Critic" or "The Political Responsibilities of the Critic." I would much rather walk into a bookstore and find a book called "The Aesthetic Responsibilies of the Statesman," or "The Literary Responsibilities of the Engineer." Criticism is not a program for social betterment, not an engine for social change. I don't see how it possibly could be. If you look for the best

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instance of a socially radical literary critic, you find a very good one indeed in William Hazlitt. But you will not find that his social activism on the left in any way conditions his aesthetic judgements, or that he tries to make imaginative literature a machine for revolution. You would not find much difference in aesthetic response between Hazlitt and Dr. Samuel Johnson on Milton, though Dr. Johnson is very much on the right politically, and Hazlitt, of course, very much an enthusiast for the French Revolution and for English Radicalism. But I can't find much in the way of a Hazlittian or Johnsonian temperament in life and literature anywhere on the current scene. There are so many tiresomenesses going on. Everyone is so desperately afraid of being called a racist or a sexist that they connive—whether actively or passively—the almost total breakdown of standards which has taken place both in and out of the universities, where writings by blacks or Hispanics or in many cases simply women are concerned.

INTERVIEWER

This movement has helped focus attention on some great novels, though. You're an admirer, for example, of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.*

BLOOM

Oh, but that is a very, very rare exception. What else is there like *Invisible Man?* Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has a kind of superior intensity and firm control. It's a very fine book indeed. It surprised and delighted me when I first read it and it has sustained several rereadings since. But that and *Invisible Man* are the only full scale works of fiction I have read by American blacks in this century which have survival possibilities at all. Alice Walker is an extremely inadequate writer, and I think that is giving her the best of it. A book like *The Color Purple* is of no aesthetic interest or value whatsoever, yet it is exalted and taught in the academies. It

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clearly is a time in which social and cultural guilt has taken over.

INTERVIEWER

I know you find this to be true of feminist criticism.

BLOOM

I'm very fond of feminist critics, some of whom are my close friends, but it is widely known I'm not terribly fond of feminist criticism. The true test is to find work, whether in the past or present, by women writers which we had undervalued, and thus bring it to our attention and teach us to study it more closely or more usefully. By that test they have failed, because they have added no one to the canon. The women writers who mattered—Jane Austen, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, and others who have always mattered on aesthetic grounds—still matter. I do not appreciate Elizabeth Bishop or May Swenson any more or less than I would have appreciated them if we had no feminist literary criticism at all. And I stare at what is presented to me as feminist literary criticism and I shake my head. I regard it at best as being well-intentioned. I do not regard it as literary criticism.

INTERVIEWER

Can it be valued as a form of social or political criticism?

BLOOM

I'm not concerned with political or social criticism. If people wish to practice it, that is entirely their business. It is not mine, heavens! If it does not help me to read a work of aesthetic value then I'm not going to be interested in it at all. I do not for a moment yield to the notion that any social, racial, ethnic, or "male" interest could determine my aesthetic choices. I have a lifetime of experience, learning and insight which tells me this.

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INTERVIEWER

What do you make of all this recent talk of the "canonical problem?"

BLOOM

It is no more than a reflection of current academic and social politics in the United States. The old test for what makes a work canonical is if it has engendered strong readings that come after it, whether as overt interpretations or implicitly interpretive forms. There's no way the gender and power boys and girls, or the New Historicists, or any of the current set are going to give us new canonical works, any more than all the agitation of feminist writing or nowadays what seems to be called African-American writing is going to give us canonical works. Alice Walker is not going to be a canonical poet no matter how many lemmings stand forth and proclaim her sublimity. It really does seem to me a kind of bogus issue. I am more and more certain that a great deal of what now passes for literary study of the so-called politically correct variety will wash aside. It is a ripple. I give it five years. I have seen many fashions come and go since I first took up literary study. After forty years one begins to be able to distinguish an ephemeral surface ripple from a deeper current or an authentic change.

INTERVIEWER

You teach Freud and Shakespeare.

BLOOM

Oh yes, increasingly. I keep telling my students that I'm not interested in a Freudian reading of Shakespeare but a kind of Shakespearean reading of Freud. In some sense Freud has to be a prose version of Shakespeare, the Freudian map of the mind being in fact Shakespearean. There's a lot of resentment on Freud's part because I think he recognizes this. What we think of as Freudian psychology is really a Shakespearean invention and, for

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the most part, Freud is merely codifying it. This shouldn't be too surprising. Freud himself says "the poets were there before me," and the poet in particular is necessarily Shakespeare. But you know, I think it runs deeper than that. Western psychology is much more a Shakespearean invention than a Biblical invention, let alone, obviously, a Homeric, or Sophoclean, or even Platonic, never mind a Cartesian or Jungian invention. It's not just that Shakespeare gives us most of our representations of cognition as such; I'm not so sure he doesn't largely invent what we think of as cognition. I remember saying something like this to a seminar consisting of professional teachers of Shakespeare and one of them got very indignant and said, "You are confusing Shakespeare with God." I don't see why one shouldn't, as it were. Most of what we know about how to represent cognition and personality in language was permanently altered by Shakespeare. The principal insight that I've had in teaching and writing about Shakespeare is that there isn't anyone before Shakespeare who actually gives you a representation of characters or human figures speaking out loud, whether to themselves or to others or both, and then brooding out loud, whether to themselves or to others or both, on what they themselves have said. And then, in the course of pondering, undergoing a serious or vital change, they become a different kind of character or personality and even a different kind of mind. We take that utterly for granted in representation. But it doesn't exist before Shakespeare. It doesn't happen in the Bible. It doesn't happen in Homer or in Dante. It doesn't even happen in Euripides. It's pretty clear that Shakespeare's true precursor—where he took the hint from—is Chaucer, which is why I think the Wife of Bath gets into Falstaff, and the Pardoner gets into figures like Edmund and Iago. As to where Chaucer gets that from, that's a very pretty question. It is a standing challenge I have put to my students. That's part of Chaucer's shocking originality as a writer. But Chaucer does it only in fits and

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starts, and in small degree. Shakespeare does it all the time. It's his common stock. The ability to do that, and to persuade one that this is a natural mode of representation, is purely Shakespearean and we are now so contained by it that we can't see its originality any more. The originality of it is bewildering.

By the way, I was thinking recently about this whole question as it relates to the French tradition. I gave what I thought was a remarkable seminar on *Hamlet* to my undergraduate Shakespeare seminar at Yale. About an hour before class, I had what I thought was a very considerable insight, though I gather my students were baffled by it. I think that I was trying to say too much at once. It had suddenly occurred to me that the one canon of French neoclassical thought which was absolutely, indeed religiously followed, by French dramatists—and this means everyone, even Molière and Racine—was that there were to be no soliloquies and no asides. No matter what dexterity or agility had to be displayed, a confidante had to be dragged onto the stage so that the protagonist could have someone to whom to address cogitations, reflections. This accounts not only for why Shakespeare has never been properly absorbed by the French, as compared to his effect on every other European culture, language, literature, dramatic tradition, but also for the enormous differences between French and Anglo-American modes of literary thought. It also helps account for why the French modes, which are having so absurd an effect upon us at this time, are so clearly irrelevant to our literature and our way of talking about literature. I can give you a further illustration. I gave a faculty seminar a while ago, in which I talked for about two hours about my notions of Shakespeare and originality. At the end of it, a woman who was present, a faculty member at Yale, who had listened with a sort of amazement and a clear lack of comprehension, said, with considerable exasperation, "Well you know Professor Bloom, I don't really understand why you're talking about originality. It is as

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outmoded as, say, private enterprise in the economic sphere." An absurdity to have put myself in a situation where I had to address a member of the School of Resentment! I was too courteous, especially since my colleague Shoshana Felman jumped in to try to explain to the lady what I was up to. But I realized it was hopeless. Here was a lady who came not out of Racine and Molière but in fact out of Lacan, Derrida and Foucault. Even if she *had* come out of Racine and Molière, she could never have hoped to understand. I remember what instantly flashed through my head was that I had been talking about the extraordinary originality of the way Shakespeare's protagonists ponder to themselves and, on the basis of that pondering, change. She could not understand this because it never actually happens in the French drama; the French critical mind has never been able to believe that it is appropriate for this to happen. Surely this is related to a mode of apprehension, a mode of criticism in which authorial presence was never very strong anyway, and so indeed it could die.

INTERVIEWER

Can you explain how you came to notice this about Shakespeare's protagonists?

BLOOM

Yes, I can even remember the particular moment. I was teaching *King Lear,* and I'd reached a moment in the play which has always fascinated me. I suddenly saw what was going on. Edmund is the most remarkable villain in all Shakespeare, a manipulator so strong that he makes Iago seem minor in comparison. Edmund is a sophisticated and sardonic consciousness who can run rings around anyone else on the stage in *King Lear.* He is so foul that it takes Goneril and Regan really to match up to him. . . . He's received his death wound from his brother; he's lying there on the battlefield. They bring in word that Goneril and Regan are dead: one slew the

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other and then committed suicide for his sake. Edmund broods out loud and says, quite extraordinarily (it's all in four words), "Yet Edmund was belov'd." One looks at those four words totally startled. As soon as he says it, he starts to ponder out loud: What are the implications that, though two monsters of the deep, the two loved me so much that one of them killed the other and then murdered herself. He reasons it out. He says, "The one the other poison'd for my sake / And after slew herself." And then he suddenly says, "I pant for life," and then amazingly he says, "Some good I mean to do / despite of mine own nature," and he suddenly gasps out, having given the order for Lear and Cordelia to be killed, "Send in time," to stop it. They don't get there in time. Cordelia's been murdered. And then Edmund dies. But that's an astonishing change. It comes about as he hears himself say, in real astonishment, "Yet Edmund was belov'd," and on that basis, he starts to ponder. Had he not said that, he would not have changed. There's nothing like that in literature before Shakespeare. It makes Freud unnecessary. The representation of inwardness is so absolute and large that we have no parallel to it before then.

INTERVIEWER

So that the Freudian commentary on Hamlet by Ernest Jones is unnecessary.

BLOOM

It's much better to work out what Hamlet's commentary on the Oedipal complex might be. There's that lovely remark of A.C. Bradley's that Shakespeare's major tragic heroes can only work in the play that they're in—that if Iago had to come onto the same stage with Hamlet, it would take Hamlet about five seconds to catch onto what Iago was doing and so viciously parody Iago that he would drive him to madness and suicide. The same way, if the ghost of Othello's dead father appeared to Othello

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and said that someone had murdered him, Othello would grab his sword and go and hack the other fellow down. In each case there would be no play. Just as the plays would make mincemeat of one another if you tried to work one into the other, so Shakespeare chops up any writer you apply him to. And a Shakespearean reading of Freud would leave certain things but not leave others. It would make one very impatient, I think, with Freud's representation of the Oedipal complex. And it's a disaster to try to apply the Freudian reading of that to Hamlet.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever acted Shakespeare?

BLOOM

Only just once, at Cornell. I was pressed into service because I knew Father Falstaff by heart. But it was a disaster. I acted as though there were no one else on stage, something that delights my younger son when I repeat it. As a result, I never heard cues. I created a kind of gridlock on stage. I had a good time, but no one else did. Not long ago President Reagan, who should be remembered only for his jokes because his jokes I think are really very good, was asked how it was he could have managed eight years as President and still look so wonderful. Did you see this?

INTERVIEWER

No.

BLOOM

It was in the *Times.* He said, "Let me tell you the story about the old psychiatrist being admired by a young psychiatrist who asks, 'How come you still look so fresh, so free of anxiety, so little worn by care, when you've spent your entire life sitting as I do every day, getting worn out listening to the miseries of your patients?' To which the older psychiatrist replies, 'It's very simple,

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young man. I never listen.' " Such sublime, wonderful and sincere self-revelation on the part of Reagan! In spite of all one's horror at what he has done or failed to do as President, it takes one's breath away with admiration. That's the way I played the part of Falstaff. I'm occasionally asked by old friends, who don't yet know me well enough, if I had ever considered becoming a psychoanalyst. I look at them in shock and say "Psychoanalyst! My great struggle as a teacher is to stop answering my own questions!" I still think, though no one in the world except me thinks so, and no one's ever going to give me an award as a great teacher, I'm a pretty good teacher, but only in terms of the great Emersonian maxim, "That which I can receive from another is never tuition but only provocation." I think that if the young woman or man listens to what I am saying, she or he will get very provoked indeed.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever teach from notes? Or do you prefer to improvise?

BLOOM

I have never made a note in my life. How could I? I have internalized the text. I externalize it in different ways at different times. We cannot step even once in the same river. We cannot step even once in the same text.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of creative writing workshops?

BLOOM

I suppose that they do more good than harm, and yet it baffles me. Writing seems to me so much an art of solitude. Criticism is a teachable art, but like every art it too finally depends upon an inherent or implicit gift. I remember remarking somewhere in something I wrote that I gave up going to the Modern Language Associa-

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tion some years ago because the idea of a convention of twenty-five or thirty thousand critics is every bit as hilarious as the idea of going to a convention of twenty-five thousand poets or novelists. There *aren't* twenty-five thousand critics. I frequently wonder if there are *five* critics alive at any one time. The extent to which the art of fiction or the art of poetry is teachable is a more complex problem. Historically, we know how poets become poets and fiction writers become fiction writers. They read. They read their predecessors, and they learn what is to be learned. The idea of Herman Melville in a writing class is always distressing to me.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that the word processor has had or is having any effect on the study of literature?

BLOOM

There cannot be a human being who has fewer thoughts on the whole question of word processing than I do. I've never even seen a word processor. I am hopelessly archaic.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps you see an effect on students' papers then?

BLOOM

But for me the typewriter hasn't even been invented yet, so how can I speak to this matter? I protest! A man who has never learned to type is not going to be able to add anything to this debate. As far as I'm concerned, computers have as much to do with literature as space travel, perhaps much less. I can only write with a ballpoint pen, with a "Rolling Writer," they're called, a black "Rolling Writer" on a lined yellow legal pad, on a certain kind of clipboard. And then someone else types it.

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INTERVIEWER

And someone else edits?

BLOOM

No one edits. I edit. I refuse to be edited.

INTERVIEWER

Do you revise much?

BLOOM

Sometimes, but not often.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a particular time of day when you like to write?

BLOOM

There isn't one for me. I write in desperation. I write because the pressures are so great, and I am simply so far past a deadline that I must turn out something.

INTERVIEWER

So you don't espouse a particular work ethic on a daily basis?

BLOOM

No, no. I lead a disordered and hurried life.

INTERVIEWER

Are there days when you do no work at all?

BLOOM

Yes, alas, alas, alas. But one always thinks about literature. I don't recognize a distinction between literature and life. I am, as I keep moaning, an experiential critic. I've spent my life proclaiming that what is called "critical objectivity" is a farce. It is deep subjectivity which has to be achieved, which is difficult, whereas objectivity is cheap.

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INTERVIEWER

What is it that you think keeps you from writing when you're unable to write?

BLOOM

Despair, exhaustion. There are long periods when I cannot write at all. Long, long periods, sometimes lasting many years. Sometimes one just has to lie fallow. And also, you know, interests change. One goes into such different modes. What was incredibly difficult was the commentary on the J-Writer, which underwent real change for me as I became more and more convinced that she was a woman, which made some considerable difference. I mean, obviously it's just a question of imagining it one way or another. No one will ever demonstrate it, that he was a man or she was a woman. But I find that if I imagine it that J was a woman, it produces, to me, more imaginatively accurate results than the other way round.

INTERVIEWER

But do you think that the importance of the J-Writer's being a woman has been exaggerated?

BLOOM

Oh, immensely exaggerated. In an interview that was published in the *New York Times,* the extremely acute Richard Bernstein allowed me to remark at some length on my strong feeling, more intense than before, that on the internal, that is to say psychological and literary evidence, it is much more likely to have been a woman than a man. I also said—I believe this quite passionately—that if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't have mentioned the putative gender of the author. It has served as a monstrous red herring which has diverted attention away from what is really controversial and should be the outrage and scandal of the book, which is the fact that the god—the literary character named Yahweh or God—has

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absolutely nothing in common with the God of the revisionists in the completed Torah and therefore of the normative Jewish tradition and of Christianity and Islam and all their branches.

INTERVIEWER

Certainly that aspect of the book has caught the notice of the normative Jewish reviewers.

BLOOM

The normative Jewish reviewers have reacted very badly, in particular Mister Robert Alter. And the other Norman Podhorrors-type review was by his henchman, Neil Kozody, a subscriber to the Hotel Hilton Kramer criteria. (The marvelous controversialist Gore Vidal invariably refers to that dubiety as the Hotel Hilton Kramer.) Mister Kozody, in playing Tonto to the Lone Ranger, went considerably further than Mister Alter in denouncing me for what he thought was my vicious attack on normative Judaism. And indeed, I've now heard this from many quarters, including from an absurd rabbinical gentleman who reviewed it in *Newsday* and proclaimed, "What makes Professor Bloom think there was such a thing as irony 3,000 years ago?"—which may be the funniest single remark that anyone could make about this or any other book.

But I'm afraid it isn't over. It's just beginning. There was a program at Symphony Space, where Claire Bloom and Fritz Weaver read aloud from the Bible, and I spoke for ten minutes at the beginning and end. I got rather carried away. In the final ten minutes I allowed myself not only to answer my normative Jewish critics, but to start talking about what I feel are the plain spiritual inadequacies for a contemporary intellectual Jewry. It has been subsequently broadcast, and all hell may break loose. Many a rabbi and Jewish bureaucrat has been after my scalp.

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INTERVIEWER

What did you say?

BLOOM

Well, I allowed myself to tell the truth, which is always a great mistake. I said that I could not be the only contemporary Jewish intellectual who was very unhappy indeed that the Holocaust had been made a part of our religion. I did not like this vision of six million versions of what the Christians call Jesus, and I did not believe that if this was going to be offered to me as Judaism it would be acceptable. I also allowed myself to say that the god of the J-Writer seems to me a god in whom I scarcely could fail to believe, since that god was all of our breath and vitality. Whereas what the Redactor, being more a censor than an author of the Hebrew Bible, and the priestly authors and those that came after in Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition, gave us are simply not acceptable to a person with literary sensibility or any high spirituality at this time.

INTERVIEWER

How have you found being in the public eye? *The Book of J* is your first book on the best-seller list.

BLOOM

Though it's the first time, I'm informed, that a work of literary criticism or commentary has been on the best-seller list, it has not been a pleasant experience.

INTERVIEWER

How so?

BLOOM

I did not, on the whole, relish the television and radio appearances, which I undertook because of the plain inadequacies of the publisher. The people who work for that publisher did the best they could, but they were

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under-staffed, under-manned, never printed enough books, and have most inadequate advertising. I know that all authors complain about that, but this is manifest.

INTERVIEWER

You were on "Good Morning America," of all things.

BLOOM

I was on "Good Morning America," I was on Larry King and many others. I must say that I came away with two radically opposed insights. One is the remarkably high degree of civility and personal civilization of both my radio and TV interlocutors. In fact, they're far more civilized and gentlemanly or gentlewomanly than journalistic interviewers usually are, and certainly more so than the so-called scholarly and academic reviewers, who are merely assassins and thugs. But also, after a lifetime spent teaching, it was very difficult to accept emotionally that huge blank eye of the TV camera, or the strange bareness of the radio studio. There is a terrible unreality about it which I have not enjoyed at all.

INTERVIEWER

You have mentioned you might write on the aesthetics of outrage as a topic.

BLOOM

Yes, the aesthetics of *being* outraged. But I don't mean being outraged in that other sense, you know, that sort of post-sixties phenomenon. I mean in the sense in which Macbeth is increasingly outraged. What fascinates me is that we so intensely sympathize with a successful or strong representation of someone in the process of being outraged, and I want to know why. I suppose it's ultimately that we're outraged at mortality, and it is impossible not to sympathize with that.

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INTERVIEWER

This is a topic that would somehow include W.C. Fields.

BLOOM

Oh yes, certainly, since I think his great power is that he perpetually demonstrates the enormous comedy of being outraged. I have never recovered from the first time I saw the W.C. Fields short, "The Fatal Glass of Beer." It represents for me still the high point of cinema, surpassing even Groucho's *Duck Soup.* Have you seen "The Fatal Glass of Beer"? I don't think I have the critical powers to describe it. Throughout much of it, W.C. Fields is strumming a zither and singing a song about the demise of his unfortunate son, who expires because of a fatal glass of beer which college boys persuade the abstaining youth to drink. He then insults a Salvation Army lassie, herself a reformed high-kicker in the chorus line, and she stuns him with a single high kick. But to describe it in this way is to say that *Macbeth* is about an ambitious man who murders the King.

INTERVIEWER

So in addition to being an outrageous critic, are you an outraged critic, in that sense?

BLOOM

No, no. I hope that I am not an outrageous critic, but I suppose I am. But that's only because most of the others are so dreadfully tame and senescent, or indeed are now politically correct or content to be social reformers who try to tell us there is some connection between literature and social change. Outraged? No, I am not outraged. I am not outraged as a person. I am beyond it now. I'm sixty years and seven months old. It's too late for me to be outraged. It would really shorten my life if I let myself be outraged. I don't have the emotional strength any-

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more. It would be an expense of spirit that I cannot afford. Besides, by now nothing surprises me. You know, the literary situation is one of a surpassing absurdity. Criticism in the universities, I'll have to admit, has entered a phase where I am totally out of sympathy with ninety-five percent of what goes on. It's Stalinism without Stalin. All of the traits of the Stalinist in the 1930s and 1940s are being repeated in this whole resentment in the universities in the 1990s. The intolerance, the self-congratulation, smugness, sanctimoniousness, the retreat from imaginative values, the flight from the aesthetic. It's not worth being truly outraged about. Eventually these people will provide their own antidote, because they will perish of boredom. I will win in the end. I must be the only literary critic of any eminence who is writing today (I cannot think of another, I'm sad to say, however arrogant or difficult this sounds) who always asks about what he reads and likes, whether it is ancient, modern or brand new, or has always been laying around, who always asks "How good is it? What is it better than? What is it less good than? What does it mean?" and "Is there some relation between what it means and how good or bad it is, and not only how is it good or bad, but why is it good or bad?" Mister Frye, who was very much my precursor, tried to banish all of that from criticism, just as I tried to reintroduce a kind of dark sense of temporality, or the sorrows of temporality, into literary criticism as a correction to Frye's Platonic idealism. I have also raised more explicitly than anyone else nowadays or indeed anyone since Johnson or Hazlitt, the question of, "Why does it matter?" There has to be some relation between the way in which we matter and the way in which we read. A way of speaking and writing about literature which addresses itself to these matters must seem impossibly naive or old-fashioned or not literary criticism at all to the partisans of the School of Resentment. But I believe that these have been the modes of western literary criticism ever

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since Aristophanes invented the art of criticism by juxtaposing Euripides with Aeschylus (to the profound disadvantage of Euripides), or indeed ever since Longinus started to work off his own anxieties about Plato by dealing with Plato's anxieties about Homer. This is the stuff literary criticism has always done and, if it is finally to be of any use to us, this is what I think it must get back to. It really must answer the questions of good and bad and how and why. It must answer the question of what the relevance of literature is to our lives, and why it means one thing to us when we are one way and another thing to us when we are another. It astonishes me that I cannot find any other contemporary critic who still discusses the pathos of great literature, or is willing to talk about why a particular work does or does not evoke great anguish in us. This is of course dismissed as the merest subjectivity.

INTERVIEWER

Can essays like Hazlitt's or Ruskin's or Pater's still be written today?

BLOOM

Most people would say no. I can only say I do my best. That's as audacious a thing as I can say. I keep saying, though nobody will listen, or only a few will listen, that criticism is either a genre of literature or it is nothing. It has no hope for survival unless it is a genre of literature. It can be regarded, if you wish, as a minor genre, but I don't know why people say that. The idea that poetry or, rather, verse writing, is to take priority over criticism is on the face of it absolute nonsense. That would be to say that the verse-writer Felicia Hemans is a considerably larger figure than her contemporary William Hazlitt. Or that our era's Felicia Hemans, Sylvia Plath, is a considerably larger literary figure than, say, the late Wilson Knight. This is clearly not the case. Miss Plath is a bad

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verse writer. I read Knight with pleasure and profit, if at times wonder and shock. These are obvious points but obviously one will have to go on making them. Almost everything now written and published and praised in the United States as verse isn't even verse, let alone poetry. It's just typing, or word processing. As a matter of fact, it's usually just glib rhetoric or social resentment. Just as almost everything that we now call criticism is in fact just journalism.

INTERVIEWER

Or an involvement with what you refer to as the "easier pleasures." What are these easier pleasures?

BLOOM

Well, I take the notion from my friend and contemporary Angus Fletcher, who takes it from Shelley and Longinus. It's perfectly clear some very good writers offer only easier pleasures. Compare two writers exactly contemporary with one another—Harold Brodkey and John Updike. Updike, as I once wrote, is a minor novelist with a major style. A quite beautiful and very considerable stylist. I've read many novels by Updike, but the one I like best is *The Witches of Eastwick.* But for the most part it seems to me that he specializes in the easier pleasures. They are genuine pleasures, but they do not challenge the intellect. Brodkey, somewhat imperfectly perhaps, does so to a much more considerable degree. Thomas Pynchon provides very difficult pleasures, it seems to me, though not of late. I am not convinced, in fact, that it was he who wrote *Vineland.* Look at the strongest American novelist since Melville, Hawthorne and James. That would certainly have to be Faulkner. Look at the difference between Faulkner at his very best in *As I Lay Dying* and at his very worst in *A Fable. A Fable* is nothing but easier pleasures, but they're not even pleasures. It is *so* easy it becomes, indeed, vulgar, disgusting, and does not afford pleasure. *As I Lay Dying* is a very difficult piece of

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work. To try to apprehend Darl Bundren takes a very considerable effort of the imagination. Faulkner really surpasses himself there. It seems to me an authentic instance of the literary sublime in our time. Or, if you look at modern American poetry, in some sense the entire development of Wallace Stevens is from affording us easier pleasures, as in "The Idea of Order at Key West," and before that "Sunday Morning," to the very difficult pleasures of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" and then the immensely difficult pleasures of a poem like "The Owl in the Sarcophagus." You have to labor with immense intensity in order to keep up. It is certainly related to the notion propounded by both Burckhardt and Nietzsche, which I've taken over from them, of the agonistic. There is a kind of standard of measurement starting with Plato on through Western thought where one asks a literary work, implicitly, to answer the question, "More, equal to, or less than?" In the end, the answer to that question is the persuasive force enabling a reader to say, "I will sacrifice an easier pleasure for something that takes me beyond myself." Surely that must be the difference between Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* an enigmatic and to me in many ways unequal play. I get a lot more pleasure out of Barabas than I do out of the equivocal Shylock, but I'm well aware that my pleasure in Barabas is an easier pleasure, and that my trouble in achieving any pleasure in reading or viewing Shylock is because other factors are getting in the way of apprehending the Shakespearean sublime. The whole question of the fifth act of *The Merchant of Venice* is for me one of the astonishing tests of what I would call the sublime in poetry. One has the trouble of having to accommodate oneself to it.

INTERVIEWER

You recently completed a stint as General Editor for the Chelsea House series, a sort of encyclopedia of literary criticism, consisting of some five hundred volumes.

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BLOOM

I haven't completed it, but it has slowed down. It has been a very strange kind of a process. It swept me away in a kind of fantastic rush. I couldn't do it again like that and I wouldn't want to do it again, but it was very intense while it lasted. When it reached its height I was writing fifteen of those introductions a month, so that every two days I had to write another. I had to reread everything, and crystallize my views very quickly. But I like that kind of writing. I learned a great deal doing it, because you couldn't waste any time. You had to get to the kernel of it immediately, and in seven to twelve pages say what you really thought about it without wasting time on scholarly outreaches or byways.

INTERVIEWER

How do you manage to write so quickly? Is it insomnia?

BLOOM

Partly insomnia. I think I usually write therapeutically. That is what Hart Crane really taught one. I was talking to William Empson about this once. He never wrote any criticism of Crane, and he didn't know whether he liked his poetry or not, but he said that the desperation of Crane's poetry appealed to him. Using his funny kind of parlance, he said that Hart Crane's poetry showed that poetry is now a mug's game, that Crane always wrote every poem as though it were going to be his last. That catches something in Crane which is very true, that he writes each lyric in such a way that you literally feel he's going to die if he can't bring it off, that his survival not just as a poet but as a person depends upon somehow articulating that poem. I don't have the audacity to compare myself to Crane, yet I think I write criticism in the spirit in which he wrote poems. One writes to keep going, to keep oneself from going mad. One writes to be able to write the next piece of criticism or to live through the next day or two. Maybe it's an apotropaic gesture,

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maybe one writes to ward off death. I'm not sure. But I think in some sense that's what poets do. They write their poems to ward off dying.

INTERVIEWER

You were for some time writing a major work on Freud to be called *Transference and Authority.* What's become of that?

BLOOM

Well, it's a huge, yellowing manuscript. I don't know whether I would have finished it, but for the five years before the Chelsea House New Haven factory closed down I increasingly had to give my work to writing those introductions. I don't regret it, since it allowed me for the first time to become a really general literary critic. But I had to set the Freud aside. Perhaps in four or five years I'll get back to it. I would still like to write a book on Freud, but I don't think it will be the *Transference and Authority* book. I've got a huge manuscript which tries to comment on every important essay or monograph of Freud's, but I don't think I would want to publish it. I would not want to write on Freud as though he were a kind of scripture. I would have to rethink the whole thing. The title was a giveaway, I now realize. I could never work out my own transference relationship with regard to the text of Freud, and I could never decide how much authority it did or didn't have for me. I suppose I foundered upon that, so it's a kind of tattered white elephant. It's up in the attic—seven or eight hundred pages of typescript. But I think I have abandoned in manuscript more books and essays than I've ever printed. The attic is full of them. Eventually I may make a bonfire of the whole thing.

INTERVIEWER

You've also referred to a sequel to *Flight to Lucifer,* your one novel.

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BLOOM

I wrote about half the sequel to it, called *The Lost Travellers' Dream,* about a changeling child, a kind of gnostic concept, though it was much less doctrinal than *A Flight to Lucifer.* I thought it was a much better piece of writing, and a couple of people whom I showed it to thought it had real promise. But I brooded on it one night, about 1981 or 1982, and I shut my notebook, took the manuscript and put it up in the attic; it's still up there, and if I ever live long enough and there are no changes in my life I might take it down. *Flight to Lucifer* is certainly the only book which I wish I hadn't published. It was alright to have composed it, but I wish I hadn't published it. I sat down one night, six months after it came out, and read through it. I thought it was—particularly in the last third or so—quite well-written, but I also felt it was an atrociously bad book. It failed as narrative, as negative characterization. Its overt attempt to be a sort of secret sequel to that sublime and crazy book *A Voyage to Arcturus* failed completely. It had no redeeming virtues. It was a kind of tractate in the understanding of gnosticism. It clearly had many obsessive critical ideas in it. *The Flight to Lucifer* now reads to me as though Walter Pater were trying to write *Star Wars.* That's giving it the best of it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find you have "slowed down" at all since your incredibly prolific period in the seventies?

BLOOM

I don't know that I'm a burned-out husk but one becomes so dialectically aware of the history of literature that one requires some multiple consciousness of oneself in regard to the total work of others. One gets more and more addicted to considering the relationship between literature and life in teaching and writing. In fact, there are certain things which had been possible at an early age which are not possible any more. I find that anything of any length I'm now trying to write is what once would

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have been called religious. I'm writing this book called *The American Religion: A Prophecy,* whose title, of course, echoes Blake's *America: A Prophecy.* It is meant to be a somewhat outrageous but I hope a true and useful book. It begins with our last election and leads into the whole question of the American spirit and American literature and above all the American religion—which existed before Emerson but to which Emerson gave the decisive terms. The religion of the United States is not Christianity, perhaps it never was Christianity, but is a curious form of American gnosis. It is a mighty queer religion, exhilarating in some ways but marked by destructiveness. It seems to me increasingly that George Bush won hands down and had to win because of the two candidates he more nearly incarnated the ideals and visions of the American religion. Our foreign policy basically amounts to making the world safe for gnosticism.

INTERVIEWER

You've written that the Christian Bible is, on the whole, a disappointment.

BLOOM

The aesthetic achievement is so much less than that of the Old—or Original—Testament. The New Testament is a very curious work from a literary point of view. So much of it is written by writers who are thinking in Aramaic and writing in demotic Greek. And that curious blend of Aramaic syntax with a Greek vocabulary is a very dubious medium. It's particularly egregious in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, the Apocalypse, which is a very bad and hysterical and nasty piece of writing. Even the most powerful parts of the New Testament from a literary point of view—certain epistles of Paul and the Gospel of John—are not works which can sustain a close aesthetic comparison with the stronger parts of the Hebrew Bible. It is striking how the Apocalypse of John has had an influence out of all proportion to its aesthetic, or for that matter, I would think, its spiritual value. It is

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not only an hysterical piece of work, but a work lacking love or compassion. In fact, it is the archetypal text of resentment, and it is the proper foundation for every School of Resentment ever since.

INTERVIEWER

Is belief anything more than a trope for you now?

BLOOM

Belief is not available to me. It is a stuffed bird, up on the shelf. So is philosophy, let me point out, and so, for that matter, is psychoanalysis—an institutional church founded upon Freud's writings, praxis and example. These are not live birds that one can hold in one's hand. We live in a literary culture, as I keep saying. This is not necessarily good—it might even be bad—but it is where we are. Our cognitive modes have failed us.

INTERVIEWER

Can belief be as individual and idiosyncratic as fiction?

BLOOM

The religious genius is a dead mode. Belief should be as passionate and individual a fiction as any strong, idiosyncratic literary work, but it isn't. It almost never is. Religion has been too contaminated by society, by human hatreds. The history of religion as an institutional or social mode is a continuous horror. At this very moment we see this with the wretched Mister Rushdie, who, by the way, alas, is not much of a writer. I tried to read *Midnight's Children* and found myself quite bored; I have tried to read *The Satanic Verses,* which seems to me very wordy, very neo-Joycean, very much an inadequate artifice. It is not much better than an upper-middle brow attempt at serious fiction. Poor wretched fellow, who can blame him? There's no way for him to apologize because the world is not prepared to protect him from the consequences of having offended a religion. All religions have always been pernicious as social, political and economic entities. And they always will be.

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INTERVIEWER

Are you still watching the TV evangelists?

BLOOM

Oh yes, I love the TV evangelists, especially Jimmy Swaggart. I loved above all his grand confession starting, "I have sinned . . . " which he delivered to all of America with his family in the front row of the auditorium. One of the most marvelous moments in modern American culture! I enjoyed it immensely. It was his finest performance. And then the revelation by the lady, when she published her article, that he never touched her! And he was paying her these rather inconsiderable sums for her to zoombinate herself while he watched. Oh dear. It's so sad. It's so terribly sad.

INTERVIEWER

I've heard that you occasionally listen to rock music.

BLOOM

Oh sure. My favorite viewing, and this is the first time I have ever admitted it to anyone, but what I love to do, when I don't watch evangelicals, when I can't read or write and can't go out walking, and don't want to just tear my hair and destroy myself, I put on, here in New Haven, cable channel 13 and I watch rock television endlessly. As a sheer revelation of the American religion it's overwhelming. Yes, I like to watch the dancing girls too. The sex part of it is fine. Occasionally it's musically interesting, but you know, 99 out of 100 groups are just bilge. And there hasn't been any good American rock since, alas, The Band disbanded. I watch MTV endlessly, my dear, because what is going on there, not just in the lyrics but in its whole ambiance, is the real vision of what the country needs and desires. It's the image of reality that it sees, and it's quite weird and wonderful. It confirms exactly these two points: first, that no matter how many are on the screen at once, not one of them feels free except in total self-exaltation. And second, it comes

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through again and again in the lyrics and the way one dances, the way one moves, that what is best and purest in one is just no part of the Creation: that myth of an essential purity before and beyond experience never goes away. It's quite fascinating. And notice how pervasive it is! I spent a month in Rome lecturing and I was so exhausted at the end of each day that my son David and I cheerfully watched the Italian MTV. I stared and I just couldn't believe it. Italian MTV is a sheer parody of its American counterpart, with some amazing consequences: the American religion has made its way even into Rome! It is nothing but a religious phenomenon. Very weird to see it take place.

INTERVIEWER

Has the decision to be a critic . . . or it's not really a decision, I suppose.

BLOOM

It's not a decision, it's an infliction.

INTERVIEWER

Has the vocation of criticism been a happy one?

BLOOM

I don't think of it in those terms.

INTERVIEWER

Satisfying?

BLOOM

I don't think of it in those terms.

INTERVIEWER

Inevitable only?

BLOOM

People who don't like me would say so. Denis Donoghue, in his review of *Ruin the Sacred Truths,* described

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me as the Satan of literary criticism. That I take as an involuntary compliment. Perhaps indeed it was a voluntary compliment. In any case, I'm delighted to accept that. I'm delighted to believe that I am by merit raised to that bad eminence.

INTERVIEWER

Are there personal costs to being the Satan of literary criticism?

BLOOM

I can't imagine what they would be. All of us are, as Mister Stevens said, "condemned to be that inescapable animal, ourselves." Or as an even greater figure, Sir John Falstaff, said, " 'Tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation." I would much rather be regarded, of course, as the Falstaff of literary criticism than as the Satan of literary criticism. Much as I love my Uncle Satan, I love my Uncle Falstaff even more. He's much wittier than Satan. He's wiser than Satan. But then, Shakespeare's an even better poet than Milton.

INTERVIEWER

Is there anything you feel especially required to complete right now, as a teacher or as a critic? Something just beyond view?

BLOOM

Well, I intend to teach Shakespeare for the rest of my life. I would like to write a general, comprehensive study on Shakespeare, not necessarily commenting on every play or every scene, but trying to arrive at a total view of Shakespeare. One always wants to write about Shakespeare. But by then I may be too old I think.

INTERVIEWER

Are you being fruitfully misread, as you would say, by anyone?

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BLOOM

I hope that somewhere in the world there is a young critic or two who will strongly misread me to their advantage. Lord knows, one is not Samuel Johnson or William Hazlitt or John Ruskin, or even Walter Pater or Oscar Wilde as critic. But, yes, I hope so.

You know, I've learned something over the years, picking up copies of my books in secondhand bookstores and in libraries, off people's shelves. I've written so much and have now looked at so many of these books that I've learned a great deal. You also learn this from reviews and from things that are cited in other people's books and so on, or from what people say to you: What you pride yourself on, the things that you think are your insight and contribution . . . no one ever even *notices* them. It's as though they're just for you. What you say in passing or what you expound because you know it too well, because it really bores you, but you feel you have to get through this in order to make your grand point, *that's* what people pick up on. *That's* what they underline. *That's* what they quote. *That's* what they attack, or cite favorably. *That's* what they can use. What you really think you're doing may or may not be what you're doing, but it certainly isn't communicated to others. I've talked about this to other critics, to other writers; they haven't had quite my extensive sense of this, but it strikes an answering chord in them. One's grand ideas are indeed one's grand ideas, but there are none that seem to be useful or even recognizable to anyone else. It's a very strange phenomenon. It must have something to do with our capacity for not knowing ourselves.

—Antonio Weiss

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Night

Tatyana Tolstaya

In the mornings Alexei Petrovich's Mama yawns loud and long: hurrah, onward, a new morning gushes in through the window; the cactuses shine, the curtains quiver; the gates of the nighttime realm have slammed shut; dragons, mushrooms and frightening dwarfs have plunged below the earth once again, life triumphs, the heralds blow their horns: a new day! a new day! Da-da-da da da-daa!

Mamochka combs her thinning hair quickly with her hands, throws her bluish legs over the high bed frame—let them hang for a moment and think: all day they'll have to drag around the one hundred and thirty-five kilos that Mamochka has accumulated in the course of eighty years.

Alexei Petrovich opened his eyes: sleep slips serenely from his body; everything is forgotten, the last crow flies off into the gloom; the nocturnal guests, gathering their ghostly, ambiguous props, have interrupted the play until next time. A breeze sweetly fans Alexei Petrovich's

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bald spot, the newly grown bristle on his cheeks pricks his palm. Isn't it time to get up? Mamochka will give the order. Mamochka is so big, loud and spacious, and Alexei Petrovich is so little. Mamochka knows everything, can do everything, gets in everywhere. Mamochka is all-powerful. Whatever she says, goes. And he—is a late child, a little bundle, nature's blunder, a soap sliver, a weed intended for burning that accidentally wormed its way in among its healthy brothers when the Sower generously scattered the full-blooded seeds of life about the earth.

Can I get up already, or is it early? Don't squawk. Mamochka is carrying out her morning ritual: she honks into a handkerchief, pulls her sticking stockings onto the columns of her legs, fastens them under her swollen knees with little rings of white rubber. She hoists a linen frame with fifteen buttons onto her monstrous breast; buttoning it in the back is probably hard. The grey chignon is reattached at Mamochka's zenith; shaken from a clean nighttime glass, her freshened teeth flutter. Mamochka's facade will be concealed under a white, pleated dickey, and, hiding the seams on the back, the insides out, napes, back stairs and emergency exits—a sturdy dark blue jacket will cover the whole majestic building. The palace has been erected.

Everything you do is good, Mamochka. Everything's right.

Everyone is already awake in the apartment, everyone's stirring, all the Men and Women have started talking. They slam doors, burble water, jingle on the other side of the wall. The morning ship has left the slip, it cuts through the blue water, the sails fill with wind, the well-dressed travelers, laughing, exchange remarks with one another on the deck. What shores lie ahead? Mamochka is at the wheel, Mamochka is on the captain's bridge, from the crow's nest Mamochka looks onto the shining ripples.

"Alexei, get up! Shave, brush your teeth, wash your

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ears! Take a clean towel. Put the cap back on the toothpaste! Don't forget to flush. And don't touch anything in there, you hear me?"

All right, all right Mamochka. How right everything you say is. How much sense everything immediately makes, how open the horizons become, how reliable a voyage with an experienced pilot! The old colored maps are unrolled, the route is drawn in with a red dotted line, all the dangers are marked with bright, clear pictures: there's the dread lion, and on this shore—a rhinoceros; here a whale spouts a toy-like fountain, and over there—is the most dangerous creature, the big-eyed, big-tailed Sea Girl, slippery, malicious, alluring.

Alexei Petrovich will wash up, put himself together; Mamochka will come and check whether he messed anything, or else the neighbors will yell again; and then it's food time! What did Mamochka make today? To get to the bathroom you have to go through the kitchen. Old ladies grumble at the hot stove, they're stewing poison in pots, they add the roots of terrible plants, follow Alexei Petrovich with bad looks. Mamochka! Don't let them hurt me!

Dripped a little on the floor. Oh no.

There's already a crowd in the hallway: the Men and Women are leaving, noisily checking for their keys, coin purses.

The corner door with opaque glass is wide open; on the threshold stands that brazen Sea Girl, smirking. She winks at Alexei Petrovich; she's all tilted; she puffs Tobacco, her Leg is stuck out, her nets laid—don't you want to be caught, eh? But Mamochka's to the rescue, she's already racing like a locomotive, her red wheels pound, she whistles: out of the way!

"Shameless hussy! Get out of here I say! Not enough for you . . . have to have a sick man as well! . . ."

"Ga-ga-ga!" The Sea Girl isn't afraid.

Dart—and into the room. Saved. Yu-u-ck. Women—are terrifying. It isn't clear what they're here for, but

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they're very unsettling. They walk by—smelling like they do . . . and they have—Legs. There are lots of them on the street, and in every house, in this one, and that one, and that one, behind every door, they've hidden, they're doing something, bending, rummaging around, giggling into their fists; they know something and they won't tell Alexei Petrovich. He'll sit down at the table and think about Women. Once Mamochka took him with her out of town, to the beach; there were lots of them there. There was one . . . a wavy sort of fairy . . . like a little dog . . . Alexei Petrovich liked her. He went up close and looked at her.

"Well, what are you staring at?"—shouted the fairy—"Get out of here, you retard!"

Mamochka came in with a bubbling pot. He looked in. There were the pink weenies of sausages. He was glad. Mamochka sets the table, moves, wipes up. The knife pops out of his fingers, strikes the oilcloth somewhere to the side.

"In your hands, take the sausage in your hands!"

Ah, Mamochka, guiding star! Heart of gold! You'll fix everything. Wise, you'll unravel all the tangles, you'll destroy all the back alleys, all the labyrinths of this incomprehensible, unnavigable world with your powerful hand, you'll sweep away all the walls—here's an even, leveled plaza! Boldly take one more step! Further on—wind-fallen trees.

Alexei Petrovich has his own world—in his head, the real one. Everything's allowed there. But this one, outside—is bad, wrong. And it's very hard to remember what's good and what's bad. They've set up and agreed upon written Rules that are awfully complicated. They've learned them, their memory is good. But it's hard for him to live by someone else's Rules.

Mamochka poured coffee. Coffee has a Smell. You drink it—and the smells goes over to you. Why isn't making your lips into a tube, crossing your eyes to look

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at your mouth and smelling yourself allowed? Let Mamochka turn her back!

"Alexei, behave yourself!"

After breakfast they cleaned the table, set out the glue, cardboard, scissors, tied a napkin around Alexei Petrovich: he's going to glue boxes. When he's done a hundred of them—they'll take them to the pharmacy. They'll get some money. Alexei Petrovich loves these boxes, he doesn't like to part with them. He wants to hide them on the sly, save at least some for himself, but Mamochka watches carefully and takes them away.

And then other people carry them out of the pharmacy, eat little white balls from them, and they tear up the boxes and throw them away! They throw them right in the trash bin, even worse, in their apartments, in the kitchen, in the trash he saw a ripped-up, dirtied box with a cigarette butt inside! A fearful black rage filled Alexei Petrovich, his eyes flashed, he foamed at the mouth, forgot words, fiery spots flashed in front of his eyes, he could have strangled, torn them to pieces! Who did this?! Who dared do this?! Come on out, why don't you! He rolled up his sleeves: where is he?! Mamochka ran over, calmed him down, led the enraged Alexei Petrovich off, took away the knife, tore the hammer from his convulsed fingers. The Men and Women were afraid and sat quietly, hidden in their rooms.

The sun has moved to another window. Alexei Petrovich has finished his work. Mamochka fell asleep in the chair, she's snoring, her cheeks gurgle, she whistles: pssshhew-ew-ew . . . Alexei Petrovich oh so quietly takes two boxes, ca-arefully, on tip-tip-tippytoes—goes to his bed, ca-aarefully carefully puts them under his pillow. At night he'll take them out and sniff them. How the glue smells! Soft, sour, muffled, like the letter *F.*

Mamochka woke up, it's time to take a walk. Down the stairs, only not in the elevator—you can't close Alexei Petrovich up in the elevator: he'll begin to flail and

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squeal like a rabbit; why don't you understand—they're pulling, pulling on my legs, dragging them down!

Mamochka floats ahead, nods at acquaintances. Today we'll deliver the boxes: unpleasant. Alexei Petrovich deliberately drags his feet: he doesn't want to go to the pharmacy.

"Alexei, don't stick out your tongue!"

The dawn has fallen behind the tall buildings. The gold window panes burn right under the roof. Special people live there, not the same kind as us: they fly like white doves, flitting from balcony to balcony. A smooth, feathery breast, human face—if a bird like that roosts on your railings, tilts its head and starts to coo and bill—you'll look into its eyes, forget human speech, and start clucking in bird language, you'll jump along the iron poles with fuzzy little legs.

Under the horizon, under the bowl of the earth, giant wheels have started turning, monstrous conveyor belts are winding, toothed gears are pulling the sun down and the moon up. The day is tired, it has folded its white wings, flies westward, big, in loose clothes; it waves a sleeve, releases stars, blesses the people walking on the chilling earth: good-bye, good-bye, I'll come again tomorrow.

They're selling ice cream on the corner. He'd really like some ice cream! Men and Women—but especially Women—stick money into the square window and get a frosty, crunchy goblet. They laugh; they throw the round, sticky papers on the ground or stick them on the wall, they open their mouths wide, lick the sweet, needle-like cold with red tongues.

"Mamochka, ice cream!"

"You're not allowed. You have a sore throat."

If he mustn't, he mustn't. But he really, really wants some! It's awful how much he wants some! If he had one of those monies, like other Men and Women have, one of the silvery, shiny ones; or a little yellow piece of paper that smells like bread—they also take those at the square

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windows! Ooh, ooh, ooh, how he wants ice cream, they're all allowed, they all get ice cream!

"Alexei, don't twist your head around!"

Mamochka knows best. I'm going to listen to Mamochka. Only she knows the safe path through the thickets of the world. But if Mamochka turned away . . . Pushkin Square.

"Mamochka, Pushkin—is he a writer?"

"A writer."

"I'm going to be a writer, too."

"Of course you will. If you want to—you will."

And why not? He wants to, so he will be. He'll get some paper, a pencil, and he'll be a writer. There, that's decided! He'll be a writer. That's fine.

In the evenings Mamochka sits in a spacious armchair, puts her glasses down on her nose and reads thickly:

> A pall the storm casts on the sky,
> And whirls the twisting snow,
> First like a beast she'll howl and cry,
> Then like a child sob soft and low.

Alexei Petrovich really loves this! He laughs heartily, baring his yellow teeth; happy, he stamps his foot.

> First like a beast she'll howl and cry,
> Then like a child sob soft and low.

The words get to the end—and turn around, get to the end again—and turn around again.

> Apall thus torm cas tson thus ky,
> An dwhirls thet wistings no!
> First likab eastsheel howland cry,
> Then likach ild sobs off tandlow!

Very good! This is how she'll howl: oo-oooooo!

Shhh, sshhh, Alexei, calm down!

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The sky is all sprinkled with stars. Alexei Petrovich knows them: little shining beads, hanging all by themselves in the black emptiness. When Alexei Petrovich lies in bed and wants to go to sleep, his legs start growing on their own, down, down, and his head grows up, up, to the black dome, up, and sways like the top of a tree in a storm, while the stars scrape his skull like sand. And the second Alexei Petrovich, inside, keeps shrinking and shrinking, compressing, he disappears in a poppy seed, in a sharp needle tip, in a microbe, in nothingness, and if he's not stopped, he'll vanish completely. But the outside, giant Alexei Petrovich sways like a pine log mast, grows, scratches his bald spot against the night dome, doesn't allow the little one to disappear into a dot. And these two Alexei Petroviches are one and the same. And this makes sense, this is right.

At home Mamochka undresses, demolishes her daytime corpus, puts on a red robe, becomes simpler, warmer, more comprehensible. Alexei Petrovich wants Mamochka to pick him up! What nonsense! Mamochka goes out into the kitchen. It seems like she's been gone an awful long time. Alexei Petrovich checked whether the boxes were still there, sniffed the oilcloth, took a chance and went out into the hall. The corner door, where the guests of the Sea Girl giggle at night, was cracked open. A white bed was visible. Where's Mamochka? Maybe she's in there? Alexei Petrovich peeped in the crack cautiously. No one. Maybe Mamochka hid in the closet? Should he go in? The room is empty. On the Sea Girl's table—an open tin can, bread, a nibbled pickle. And—a little piece of yellow paper and silver circles. Money! Take the money, run downstairs along the dark staircase, into the labyrinth of streets, look for the square window, and they'll give him a sweet cold cup!

Alexei Petrovich grabs, jingles, knocks things over, runs, slams the door, breathes loud and fast, trips. The street. It's dark. Which way? That way? Or this way?

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What's in his fist? Money! Someone else's money! The money shows through his hairy fist. Stick his hand in his pocket. No, it'll show through anyway. Someone else's money! He took someone else's money! Passersby turn around, whisper to one another: "He took someone else's money!" People press to the windows, shoving each other: Let me look! Where is he? There he is! He has money! Aha! You took it, did you?! Alexei Petrovich runs in the dark. Clink clink clink clink—the coins in his pocket. The whole city has spilled out onto the street. The shutters are thrown open. Hands point from every window, eyes shine, long red tongues stick out: "He took the money!" Let out the dogs! The fire engines blare, the hoses uncoil: where is he? Over there! After him! Crazed Alexei Petrovich rushes about! Throw it away, tear it from his hands, away, away, there it is, there it is! With his foot! Stamp on it with his foot! Traaaammmpple it! That's it . . . There . . . It's not breathing. It's quiet. It's died out. He wiped his face. There. Now where? Night. There's a smell. Where's Mamochka? Night. In the entryways wolves stand in black columns: they're waiting. I'll walk backwards. I'll trick them. Good. It's stifling. I'll unbutton. I'll unbutton everything. Good. Now? Women with Legs walked by. They turned around. Snorted. So that's the way it is?! Whaaaat?! Me?! I'm a wolf! I walk backwards!!! Aha, scared are you? I'll catch up with you, I'll pounce, we'll see just what these Legs of yours are! He rushed at them. A cry. A-a-a-a! A blow. Don't hit! A blow. Men smell of Tobacco, they hit you in the stomach, the teeth! Don't! . . . Forget it, leave him alone—don't you see? . . . Let's go.

Alexei Petrovich leans against a drainpipe, spits something black, whines. Little one, so little, alone, you got lost on the street, you came into this world by mistake! Get out of here, it's not for you! Alexei Petrovich cries with a loud howl, raising his disfigured face to the stars.

Mamochka, Mamochka, where are you? Mamochka,

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the road is black, the voices are silent, the paths lead into a deep swamp! Mamochka, your child is crying, dying, your only one, beloved, long-awaited, long-suffered! . . .

Mamochka is running, Mamochka is gasping, she stretches out her hands, shouts, grabs, presses him to her breast, feels him all over, kisses him. Mamochka is sobbing—she's found him, found him!

Mamochka leads Alexei Petrovich by the reins into a warm den, into a soft nest, under a white wing.

The swollen face is washed. Alexei Petrovich snuffles at the table, a napkin tied round him.

"Do you want a soft-boiled egg? Soft-boiled, a runny one?"

Alexei Petrovich nods his head: yes, I want one. The grandfather clock ticks. It's peaceful. Delicious hot milk, soft, like the letter *N.* Something clears inside his head. That's right, he wanted to be . . .

"Mamochka, give me paper and a pencil! Quick! I'm going to be a writer!"

"Lord almighty! My poor baby! Why on earth. . . . Well, now, don't cry, calm down, I'll give you some; just wait, you have to blow your nose."

White paper, a sharp pencil. Quickly, quickly, while he hasn't forgotten! He knows everything, he has understood the world, understood the Rules, grasped the laws connecting millions of snatches and odd bits and pieces! Lightning strikes Alexei Petrovich's brain! He frets, he grumbles, grabs a piece of paper, pushes the glasses aside with his elbow, and, surprised at his own joyful renewal, hurriedly writes the newly acquired truth in big letters: "Night. Night. Night. Night. Night. Night. Night. Night. Night. Night . . ."

—translated from the Russian
by Jamey Gambrell

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John Hollander

Selected Short Subjects

A Line from Dubellay

"Mère d'amour et fille de la Mer!"
Over the golden ocean waves of hair
Plunge, bright with her origin, where we
See in the water the daughter of the sea.

After John Owen (1564–1622), Himself After Horace

Pro patria mori dulce et
decorum est
But for both you and your country
to live is best.

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From Alfred's Almanack

Spring
Would sing

Though Summer
Was dumber.

Then Autumn
Caught him,

The sprinter,
Winter.

Uncommonplace

It's not some paradigm beyond the sky
Working its will by which we'll be undone,
Nor grim Necessity, with narrowed eye,
Finishing us before we had begun,
But hard-worked System, having a bit of fun
With us, that fixes $e^{\pi i}$
  Equal to -1.

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Sent with a Book of Robert Frost's Poetry

As you read, remember from time to time
That another word for "frost" is "rime".

From the Oracle

Love, now, and death waltz down the streets together
Embracing those who reasoned not the need.
Beware the Bargeman, waiting by our nether
Parts for his passengers in every weather:
Some come, then some go. Give head, but take heed.

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Mark Levine

At the Experimental Farm

They love me.
Each morning they fill the strongbox
in my chest with grass
and salt pellets—I have good hallucinations.
I think I am a caterpillar. I think I am
a wall. They spray me with anti-freeze, they turn me
each spring, I watch the buds spread open,
metal lips fluttering.

Up in the Big House they eat sugar all night making
plans.
Dwarf cows? Lambs cross-bred
with coyotes? Potatoes harvested from radioactive
dirt?
Me?—with my lucite skin, all my processes exposed,
they notch me with compasses, they draw charts
on me with red crayons. I hear them talk about me
night after night. I am the sum of what
they say about me.

Is it "habit" for them to hover above me like
clipboards?
To blow smoke-rings beneath my eyelids?
I am cold tonight, wrapped in this suit of chilled fat.
They call me "Baby" and I am not. I will say "Aaah"
no more. My mouth tastes of motor oil.

The old dance begins again:
I scrape myself free with a tooth, the moon gleaming
down
like a bottle cap. I brush cement from my hair.

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Remove the cameras from my lungs.
Eat from a bag of medical waste.
Pour ice-water in a hot glass.

Oh peel off my electrodes—dig the needles
from the palms of my hands—what am I
when not monitored?

I make my way past the Big House, keeping low.
One last look at them—naked beneath white coats,
clumps of straw glued on their stethoscopes.
I bark at them with hate and desire.
One never forgets the first time.

I push through the electric fence.
A claw dangles
from beneath a cobalt wing, waving at me like a
lover.
How can they know I'll be back?

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David Sheppard

Walking Away

They are my parents.
Both are walking toward me,
she on the left with a mud caked
wooden box in her hand propped
against her, he on the right with
a shovel over his shoulder, balanced
at the end by his hand.

She is looking at me through
owl-like glasses and about to laugh
as if I am just snapping the picture.
He is looking at her, eyes diverted
downward checking out the wooden
box, a look of amusement on his face
as if she has just said something funny.

It is precisely sundown. Shadows
dull all things. They are walking
two tracks of a dirt lane which goes
on behind them, then turns into
the sunset. Next to her is a row of
wooden posts and slack barbed wire
standing in tall golden grass.

The fence trails off behind her then reappears
as a line of telephone poles that shrink into
the distance. Next to him is a dark shadowed
oak tree where years ago I killed birds with
a BB gun then worried just before sleep. Within
the shadows of this tree is an old tractor with
rust replacing green paint.

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The ashes from the big house that burned to
the ground, are gone. The old house that replaced
it, made from two garages with a wash room
for a kitchen, is also gone. All that remains
is row upon row of white cotton. Just behind
him through dark leaves is the milk house where
milk was strained, checked for mastitis and cooled.

All that remains of the barn is the cement floor
with the gutter used for scooping a thick mixture
of urine and manure. This is where he beat the cows
with 2×4's and shovels. The stanchions that held
fast the bawling cow's heads that he de-horned with
pruning shears then pour the powdered coagulant
over the stubs that spurted blood are also gone.

Next to the tree are two metallic blue boxes mounted
vertically to a power pole. This is the sole mark
of the present. The bottom box is for starting
and stopping the nearby pump which supplies water
for irrigation. In the top box is a round glass cylinder
that contains the meter which tells the power
company how much of his money is theirs.

They are walking toward me, she with
a white blouse, the tail out and sleeves rolled
mid-way to the elbow, her orange skirt exposing
her white calf and ankle; he with a white shirt,
the tail tucked in and sleeves rolled above the
elbow, the left forearm glistening slightly with
water from turning off an irrigation valve.

The toe of her forward foot is off the ground,
placed precisely in front of the back foot which
has the heel arched high. His left foot is suspended
above ground, the toe pointed outward, the right foot
planted firmly. His Levis which house the lower
portion

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of his bear-like body, are held in place by a leather
belt
which at one time he used to whip his four boys.

They are walking away from all this.
His hand is at his side, slightly in front.
It holds a key, rusted and caked with mud.

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Enid Shomer

Hydrotherapy

Between laps the sun drops
through its arc, lurching
like the clock hand
I secretly watched
during homeroom Bible reading,
certain only time, not prayer,
would take me to my Maker.
These days I am out of my element

everywhere. On airplanes
I strike foxhole bargains.
In the pool, I thrash out
drowning scenes: cramps
which roll me to a bowling
ball, aspirin-induced stroke
(face-down, top step),
or simple panic in the deep

end. I want to be light
as an oil slick. I want
to believe in the clearer
tensions, in Archimedes' laws.
He was searching for impure
gold in his king's new crown
when he discovered the *Principle*
of displacement: a body
in fluid grows light.

But it's an uneasy union—
water seeping into my goggles,
coarse threads of hair stitching

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in and out of my mouth.
The principle of buoyancy that keeps
us all afloat despite
our faith or lack of it
sent the royal goldsmith

to his death.
Now my arms tick forward
freestyle, crossing the pool
seventy long times. I leave
no tracks and never arrive.
The swim lane deepens
with dusk. The sun
spills nothing as it sets.

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Two Poems by Eavan Boland

At the Glass Factory in Cavan Town

Today it is a swan:
The guide tells us
these are in demand.
The glass is made

of red lead and potash
and the smashed bits
of crystal sinews
and decanter stoppers

crated over there—
she points—and shattered
on the stone wheel
rimmed with emery.

Aromas of stone and
fire. Deranged singing
from the grindstone,
and behind that

a mirror—my
daughters' heads turned
away in it—garnering
grindstone and fire.

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The glass-blower goes
to the furnace.
He takes a pole
from the earth's

core: the earth's core
is remembered in
the molten globe at
the end of it.

He shakes the pole
carefully to and fro.
He blows once. Twice.
His cheeks puff and

puff up: he is
a cherub at the very
edge of a cornice with
a mouthful of zephyrs—

sweet intrusions into
leaves and lace hems.
And now he lays
the rod on its spindle.

It is red. It is
ruddy and cooler.
It is cool now
and as clear as

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the distances of this
county with its drumlins,
its herons, its closed-
in waterways on which

we saw this morning,
as we drove over
here, a mated pair
of swans. Such

blind grace as they
floated with told us
they did not know
that every hour

every day, and
not far away from
there, they were
entering the legend of

themselves. They gave no
sign of it. But what
caught my eye, my
attention was the safety

•

they assumed as
they sailed their own
images. Here, now—
and knowing that

the mirror still holds
my actual flesh—
I could say to them:
reflection is the first

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myth of loss, but
they floated away and
away from me as if
no one would ever blow

false airs on them
or try their sinews
in the fire, at
the core, and they

took no care
not to splinter, they
showed no fear
they would end as

this one which is
uncut yet still might:
a substance of its own
future form, both

fraction and refraction
in the deal-wood
crate at the door
we will leave by.

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Inscriptions

About holiday rooms there can be
a solid feel at first. Then, as you go upstairs,
the air gets
a dry rustle of excitement

the way a new dress comes out of tissue paper,
up and out of it, and
the girl watching this thinks:
Where will I wear it? Who will kiss me in it?

Peter
was the name on the cot.
The cot was made of the carefully-bought
scarcities of the nineteen-forties:
oak, tersely planed and varnished.
Cast-steel hinges.

I stood where the roof sloped into
paper roses—
half a world away from where I lived—
in a room where a child once went to sleep;
looking at blue, painted lettering:

As he slept,
someone had found for him
five pieces of the alphabet which said
the mauve petals of his eyelids as they closed out
the scalded hallway moonlight made of the ocean at
the end of his road.

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Someone knew
the importance of giving him a name.

For years I have known
how important it is
not to name
the coffins, the murdered in them,
the deaths in alleys and on doorsteps,
happening ninety miles away from my home;

in case they rise out of their names
and I recognize

the child who slept peacefully,
and the girl
who guessed at her future in
the dress as it came out of its box, falling free in
kick pleats of silk.

And what comfort can there be
in knowing that

in a distant room
his sign is safe tonight,
and reposes its modest blues in darkness?

Or that outside his window
the name-eating elements—the salt wind, the rain–
must find
headstones to feed their hunger?

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Eric Trethewey

Scar

Hunting along the logging road
swamped through to Pockwock Lake,
we stopped beside the spring to drink—
startled a drowsing snake.

I must have been fourteen that fall,
still young enough to prove
on a dare the limits of my nerve.
Before the snake could move

from sight, I'd picked it up, my grip
hard back of the swiveling head,
clamped tight in fear of its flicking tongue.
I'll lop 'er off, Bob said,

hold still. The knife rose in his fist,
and knowing's ancient form
writhed in mine, twined its length
along my held-out arm.

The snubby head swung left, swung right,
the blade came down—but wide.
The big woods breathed and circled in.
Bob raised the knife, he tried

again to gauge that narrowest gap,
to echo as act what's known
by the eye. A snake slithered in the leaves
as he cut me to the bone.

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Glimpses

Raymond Carver

The following excerpts of conversations with close friends and family of Raymond Carver have been edited and rearranged from the interviews conducted by Sam Halpert for the collection . . . When We Talk about Raymond Carver, *to be published by Peregrine Smith Books.*

Some additional material was supplied by the subjects for this feature.

—J.L.

Maryann Carver, *Raymond Carver's first wife:*

I was almost fifteen. I was working at my first real job at a place called the Spudnut Shop, a doughnut store, in Union Gap, Washington, June of 1955. This very good-looking young man walked in with his younger brother and sat down on a stool. The moment I saw him I had this incredible intuition that he was going to be the father of my children. Of course, in those days I didn't know about past lives, and that sort of thing. We just looked at each other and smiled.

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Ray always wanted to be a writer, from the third grade on. He had been taking a home-study course from the Palmer Institute of Writing, paid for by his father who worked at a lumber mill. Ray would do those assignments religiously, and feel very guilty if he skipped any. I had a reading list of twenty books for summer break from school—Tolstoy, Flaubert and Chekhov. Ray would come to the library with me and, well, he had never heard of these writers before. I told him what they were about, explained to him their styles and so forth. He began to realize there was more to read than Thomas Costain and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Ray didn't want to go to college. He wanted money to buy a car, a phonograph and clothes. He had seen the movie *King Solomon's Mines* about fourteen times and so he and two friends decided that they were going to South America to pick diamonds out of the mouth of the Amazon River. They expected to be gone for two years on this great adventure. We shared a very melancholic Christmas in 1956 before he left. One of the boys had a beat-up old car that took them to Mexico as far as Guaymas, but they had a falling out. Three weeks after he left, Ray arrived back, absolutely broke and without having had a thing to eat for three days.

While I finished at the St. Paul's School for Girls in Walla Walla, Ray was staying with an aunt in Yakima. He took me to the formal dances at the school. We had a lovely spring and were married four days after I graduated.

When I got a scholarship from the University of Washington to study law, I told Ray that I wouldn't be happy with anyone who didn't want to go to college. Nobody in his family had ever gone. Ray didn't particularly like school. He hoped he could just read a lot, which he always did, and that that would prepare him adequately to be a writer (he had an absolutely extraordinary vocabulary). But in the fall of 1957 he entered Yakima Community College for a year, then transferred to Chico State

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in California for two years. Ultimately, he graduated from Humboldt State College in Arcata, California, in 1963.

He had written some science-fiction stories, but when he got into John Gardner's writing class at Chico, he no longer was interested in writing about little green monsters. He began to write literary stories, his He/She stories. He wrote "Furious Seasons" at Chico. Gardner thought it was outrageously good, taught the hell out of it in class and included it in the college literary magazine.

Almost always, we rented a house with an extra bedroom for Ray to use as a study. In addition to that, whenever he could afford it, Ray would rent a room where he could be alone to do his writing. All those stories about his having to write in his car are part of a "poor me" syndrome to add to the drama of his success. Even when we had our first big house in Arcata, he

Ray and Maryann Carver, June 7, 1957.

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rented a room somewhere else for his writing: in Sacramento, Palo Alto, Cupertino. We sacrificed necessities and certainly luxuries so he could rent space to write; but for the first thirteen years of our marriage, one or the other of us was in college, without any money. Thirteen years . . .

Ray's first story accepted by a real magazine was "Pastoral," in *Western Humanities Review*. He received two copies for payment. On the very same day, a magazine in Arizona named *Target* accepted Ray's poem "Brass Ring," another first. That evening it seemed that if we did the right things, the right things would happen. We went to our friends David and Charlene Palmer's house and burst in on their dinner. They dropped everything and called some friends who called other friends. We celebrated for three days.

I edited every one of Ray's stories before anybody else. Ray would encourage me to do what John Gardner did—take a pencil and strike out any words I thought didn't belong. He would invariably take fifty percent of my suggestions and ignore the other fifty percent.

In 1963 Dick Day helped Ray get a grant for a thousand dollars at the University of Iowa Writers Workshop. We piled all of our belongings onto the roof rack of our '53 Chevy, "Old Faithful," and, with our son and daughter, we were on our way.

We stayed at a trailer park until our application for student housing was approved. After all the moves we'd made, when I saw the Quonset hut, a World War II relic that served as university married-student housing, I just sat down on a bed and cried. There were cement floors, open cupboards in the kitchen, and the hot-water tank was in the middle of the living-room floor. The children's room was like a cell with two little bunks and a tiny window.

Whenever we'd land in some godforsaken little room like this, I'd ask Ray jokingly how would we ever survive in such a place, and he'd smile and pull a little can of roast

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beef hash or whatever out of his pocket and prepare a lunch for us.

That spring, after we had had such a desperate time financially, I checked around and found out that Ray had more publications than anybody else in the workshop. He had written "Sixty Acres," "The Student's Wife," "Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?" But he was very quiet in class. People did not know about him. One weekend, they were reading manuscripts to give out fellowships and Ray hadn't been invited to participate. So I got my hair done, put on my best dress, and gathered all his published stories and the rest of his manuscript-in-progress, which was *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* and I went down to director Paul Engle's office at 8:00 A.M. and asked to see him. He wasn't there, but I said, "That's fine, I'll wait." I waited all day. Finally, around four in the afternoon, Paul Engle showed up. He picked up his mail and invited me into his office. He asked me what was on my mind, but as I started to tell him, he kept his nose in his mail. So I stopped talking and after a couple of minutes he noticed. I said, "It's okay, why don't you just finish reading your mail." He pushed it aside. I asked him if he remembered what happened when Tennessee Williams came to Iowa. Everybody there knew how Williams had written *The Glass Menagerie* and his teachers at Iowa had rejected it, refused to give him his degree, and had virtually ridden him out of town on a rail. Engle straightened up in his chair, half insulted and half interested. I told him that he had another situation almost exactly like that with my husband, that Ray had more published stories and poems than any other student in the workshop and that he was a far better writer than many on the faculty. Engle agreed to give Ray's manuscript to a faculty reader over the weekend. The upshot was that John Clellon Holmes came back on Monday raving about Ray's work. They offered Ray a stipend for the following year, but Ray had already decided to move on. He had

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itchy feet and a short attention span. He could never stand to be bored. We left for California.

Ray tried all kinds of little jobs . . . as a desk clerk in a hotel, and as a stockboy at Weinstock's Department Store, until his crew was fired when one of them stole some cookies.

After the cookie thing, there was no money. Our lights were turned off and when we couldn't pay the rent, I took the children to my mother's in Paradise, California. We were in debt. With tears running down my cheeks, I withdrew from all my classes at Sacramento State, and found a job as a barmaid. Ray suggested bankruptcy. I was adamantly opposed. My family upbringing was different. Still, we went into bankruptcy twice.

Ray got a job as janitor at Mercy Hospital mopping, housekeeping, and changing sheets. The night shift was the gravy train, and he had his days free to write. Things began to turn; I became office manager at *Parents Magazine*'s Cultural Institute where I worked with Werner Erhard, who later founded EST. Werner and I were good friends. We'd fly around to major cities to deliver addresses at various hotels. There was an opportunity to make money, dress well, use my intelligence, and I went for it. I made lots of money, and before long I was wearing hundred-dollar dresses from I. Magnin's. I had a maroon Pontiac convertible that was faster than the wind . . . living the high life, you know. These two handsome, brilliant men were in my life: Werner Erhard and Raymond Carver. While that was going on, Ray had this janitor job, which was okay for him, for a while, as it gave him time to get some writing done, but certainly had no prestige. He got jealous of my job, the power, the attention. So he got a job as an editor in Palo Alto, the first white-collar job he ever had. Then he gave me an ultimatum: either give up your marriage or your job. Werner and I didn't have a romance; it was just a work association, no hanky-panky whatsoever. But Ray had

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decided to become head of the family with a vengeance, and *his* career came first.

I was used to running an office, making good money, and now all of a sudden, nothing. To create some excitement in my life, I entered San Jose State, and in the spring, I applied for a scholarship to study abroad. I was such a good student that we had our choice to go anywhere: Uppsala, Sweden, or Florence, Italy, or Tel Aviv, Israel. We went to Israel because that fellowship offered an extra five hundred dollars. Israel was the absolutely perfect place for me given my later interest in spiritual realities. But Ray and my daughter both became very disgruntled. He'd say,"I don't know what I'm doing in *Asia*!" He resented that we didn't have the villa on the Mediterranean we had been promised. We had an apartment that seemed small by our standards, only two bedrooms, but actually it was the apartment of the conductor of the Israel Philharmonic, filled with paintings and wonderful art objects. Ray would sit out on the balcony reading *Life on the Mississippi.*

The children went to school in the old Arab city of Jaffa, an hour and a half bus ride with three transfers. One day a bomb went off in a wastebasket at the bus depot, killing six people, just fifteen minutes after our children had been there. Ray said, "This may be the high time of your life, studying at the university, learning Hebrew, listening to Golda Meir speak, dancing Jewish folk dances, but I'm taking my children and going home."

Chuck Kinder, *author, professor at the University of Pittsburgh:*

After he returned from abroad, we were on Stegner fellowships at Stanford together. He was a big shambling fellow, always wore shades. He looked like someone whose lunch money I'd have taken away when I was a kid. I'd seen him sitting around mumbling a lot, smok-

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ing, and biting on his thumbnail. Corduroy pants. Shirts that he had buttoned up to the collar, like he didn't care what he looked like. One day I needed a ride to El Camino Real and I asked if anyone was going in that direction. Ray raised his hand and said he was, and I said to myself, "Dear God, not this goofy guy."

Douglas Unger, *author of* Leaving The Land *and other novels:*

Some of his stories in the first collection had been around in some form from the time he was eighteen. Sometimes he'd simply change a few elements of a story, or he'd add a frame to the story, maybe change character names. He'd send out the version he thought best. Years later he might send out the other version.

Chuck Kinder:

He was always pulling stunts. He was teaching at Berkeley while he had his Stegner at Stanford, which he wasn't supposed to do, or he'd send his stories out to a half-dozen magazines at once. That story "So Much Water So Close To Home" was published in two separate journals before he sold it to *Playgirl.* The same story.

Douglas Unger:

When I was the managing editor at *The Chicago Review,* his story "They're Not Your Husband" came into the office. Most of the manuscripts we were reading in those days were so-called experimental fiction—highly textured prose, with highly innovative and surreal subjects. Ray's story was nothing like that. It was straightforward, realistic, with an unadorned style and humorous implications. There was also a strange, dark quality to the writing that I felt myself immediately drawn to. The editor-in-chief, Richard Hack, and I, and the other editors accepted the story that same day. We had never acted that quickly before.

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Maryann Carver:

We had worked so hard and, by 1972, we had both become teachers; we had enough money and we owned a lovely home. Then when everything was in place and the great challenge gone, all we had worked for was knocked down.

We had always drunk socially but it was always a safe thing because we'd look out for each other, and when we did get drunk we thought it was funny. Ray's father was an alcoholic, but we didn't know that alcoholism was a disease. When Ray would write a story about drinkers, as far back as 1967, it wasn't about us. He'd known enough drinkers growing up. But Ray was very shy; to be up in front of a class or an audience was terrifying for him, at first. It was when he started to teach, his first year at Santa Cruz, that his drinking habits changed.

Douglas Unger:

The first fall after I had met Maryann's sister, Amy, we were invited to their home in Cupertino for Christmas. Ray met me at the airport in a broken-down Mercury Comet station wagon full of dents and rattles, barely running. He looked like a man at the edge of death from drinking. The whole San Francisco and Stanford writers' scene was there at one time or another over the holidays—Bill Kittredge, Chuck Kinder, Jim Crumley, Lenny Michaels, Thomas Sanchez, Gurney Norman, Ed McClanahan. Their parties would go on for weeks sometimes, moving from one place to another. Because of all the drinking, it was a very rough holiday. Ray stood up for me in a drunken fight with one of Amy's former boyfriends. But there were a lot of good times, too. As soon as Ray got up in the morning, everyone in the house had to get up to keep him company. He'd knock on the door and shout, "Hot doughnuts! Steaming hot cups of coffee! How about a little heart starter?" And he'd have Bloody Marys, coffee and doughnuts and platters of food out on the table.

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Maryann Carver:

In 1970, when I began to teach, Ray had a whole year off to write. He wrote prodigiously and finished the bulk of *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* during that year. In the fall of 1971, Ray began teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz. But that spring, Ray went through another bout of depression. We'd studied existentialism. Angst and melancholy went with the trade in those days and Ray was good at them.

Leonard Michaels, *author, professor at the University of California:*

What can I say? When I was low, I read Hegel. When he was low, he got drunk.

Douglas Unger:

Maryann taught English for eight years. She had always worked, but ends just didn't meet in that house. Ray began to hang paper all over town, writing hot checks just to get enough liquor to get through the day.

Chuck Kinder:

I remember one night we had to carry them home and literally put them in bed. Maryann was so impressed by that. She said their other friends would just dump them on the porch for their kids to find them in the morning.

Maryann Carver:

During the summer of 1972 Ray took a trip to Montana to visit Bill Kittredge, and he met a group of writers who did a lot of drinking. These men got up, showered, shaved and dressed in fresh starched shirts at eight in the morning as if they were going off to work; what they were doing was going off to drink. They were into their second and third wives, too. "Another wife, another life." Remember, this was the seventies. Ray and I seemed like the last holdouts and were ridiculed for being "sweet and quaint," by all sorts of people. High

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school sweethearts. These people would take scenes from our life and satirize them in their novels.

Douglas Unger:

It was amazing to me as a young writer to sit at a table with Bill Kittredge, Ray, Chuck Kinder and the others, and hear them telling stories and topping each other. Ray, or one of the others, would ask, "Are you going to use that one? Because if you're not, it's mine."

William Kittredge, *author, screenwriter:*

Ray and I were sitting at a bar in Missoula when a woman bartender told us about being arrested the night before because she and her boyfriend had gotten stoned and moved all their furniture out on the lawn, set up lights and all. After a while the neighbors got annoyed and called the cops. I looked at Ray and told him that one had to be his. So he wrote it, changed it a little. It became the one about the guy moving all his stuff out in the driveway for a yard sale, "Why Don't You Dance?"

Douglas Unger:

In those days, Ray often used to say, "I never had a problem that money couldn't solve." But I think a bigger problem was that no publisher anywhere in the country would accept his book, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* The collection represented fourteen years of work. Editors found the stories too depressing, or not in tune with what the culture wanted to read. Short-story collections were very hard to get published back then. Ray had sent it to the Iowa Short Fiction Award contest. Even though the preliminary judges selected his book to win, their decision was reversed. Jack Leggett, who succeeded Engle as director of the workshop, was so outraged that he told everyone that not only did he think Ray's manuscript should have won first prize, hands down, but that he was going to offer Ray a teaching job.

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Maryann Carver:

Ray was flattered to get the job, but he would drink the moment he got out of class. He drank around his job.

William Kittredge:

Ray flew back and forth between teaching jobs in Iowa City and Santa Cruz. Some of his friends and I would go down and get him off the plane on Thursday afternoon. He'd always come home loaded. On Friday he'd be supposed to teach at Santa Cruz. A couple of times he made it, but most of the time we'd pin a note to the door saying, "Mr. Carver is too sick to teach." Then he began to not show up at all. Chuck Kinder and I taught the class together and it was a disaster. I think Ray must have met that class twice. The provost of Santa Cruz got wind of what was going on and that Ray was also teaching at Iowa City. Fired him. Deservedly so.

Maryann Carver:

He flew back and forth. His friends called him Running Dog.

Leonard Michaels:

He even managed to con United into flying him for free, telling them he'd put United into his stories. Of course, he never wrote a word about them. He also had a lover in Denver where he changed planes. So there he was, holding on to two teaching jobs, a couple of thousand miles apart, and drinking and carrying on a love affair, and conning United into flying him back and forth.

Chuck Kinder:

On their fifteenth wedding anniversary Ray and Maryann came sweeping over to my house. They'd had a few. Maryann invited us to go out and celebrate with them at a Greek restaurant. She had obviously been to this place before, but she wouldn't come clean as to who she'd

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been there with or why, and Ray was getting very suspicious. This restaurant had a floor show, a strongman who picked up tables with his teeth. He would do a backbend and invite people from the audience to come up and step on his stomach. The strongman's assistant took Ray by the hand and dragged him up there. Ray was so drunk he couldn't stand on the guy's stomach. Stumbled and tumbled all over him.

Despite the fact that it was their anniversary, Ray began to sulk. He didn't want to pay and said we should walk the check. He went out and laid in the back seat of the car. My wife was the designated driver and we were the designated drunks. When the waiter came out after us, before Maryann had made it to the door, Ray called out to my wife from the back seat, "Step on it! Step on it!" He was perfectly willing to leave his wife behind, anniversary or not.

At this point, Ray and Maryann were having trouble. Ray was deeply in love with another woman he'd been involved with for a couple of years. Maryann had found a pack of letters from her, so Ray gave me some stuff to take back to her for safekeeping in Montana. I delivered the stuff from Ray and I fell madly in love with her. That was Diane, my present wife. Ray was real pissed at me. He said that they always called him Running Dog but that I was the real running dog.

Ray phoned one day. He called me names like backstabber and asshole and all that, but we were laughing. When Diane and I moved back down to Palo Alto, Ray had moved back in with Maryann and we were all closer than we had been when I was with my first wife.

Douglas Unger:

Gordon Lish had gone from *Esquire* to McGraw-Hill, and I believe one of the conditions of his accepting the job was that he could publish Ray's book. So Ray had the

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book, finally, on its way to being published, but I think he felt this was happening way too late.

Maryann Carver:

Will You Please Be Quiet, Please? wasn't published until 1976, and for years, leading up to that, Ray didn't draw a sober breath.

Leonard Michaels:

When we first met he owned a VW bug. It was always strewn with unpaid traffic tickets and emergency room receipts.

Chuck Kinder:

Maryann had started to go to AA and, when she found out about Diane and Ray, she had a fling with someone down there. She told Ray about it and there had been black eyes. The drinking got heavier and heavier. At our place one night, Maryann was wearing a beautiful white dress and trying to keep everything afloat, break the tension by being witty and lively. But I could sense Ray was in a lot of pain. The rage and pain was so deep within him, it would truly frighten him. Maryann started flirting with a guy called Shorty Ramos—a couple of kisses at the table. Later, Maryann said something, and Ray hit her on the side of her head with a bottle. The bottle shattered, glass flying across the room. Maryann ran outside. Diane found her standing in the alley, bleeding heavily, her white dress drenched in red. She said, "Look what Ray did." Diane called for an ambulance and went with her to the hospital. Ray was devastated by what he had done. He couldn't talk. This time she would have bled to death. Funny thing, even years later, after he stopped drinking, he couldn't remember hitting her with the bottle.

Douglas Unger:

He made so many attempts over that year and a half to stop drinking. Once I went with Chuck Kinder and

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Ray to a summer home up in Tiburon, loaned to us for that purpose. Chuck and Ray were going to try to stop drinking together, but they weren't there four hours before they discovered a fully stocked liquor cabinet and the whole thing turned into a kind of drinking contest between them.

Chuck Kinder:

Once we talked about getting tattooed and we drew little pictures of the tattoo we wanted. Mine was a heart with Diane's name across it. Ray drew a picture of a real heart, an anatomical heart, not a valentine, with Maryann's name in it.

They'd have their sweet times together, but it was the last of the sweet times. They used to go down to Market Street and spend afternoons watching porn movies. There were a lot of breakups. There'd be a shattering of glass, yells and screams, and then howls in the night, and the next minute they'd be ordering pizza. She'd say, "Did you see what he just did?" He and Maryann would tell these horrific stories about what they'd gone through, laughing about them, and the stories took on the tall-tale quality of legends.

When Ray was drinking, he'd blank out a lot. So very often Ray would question her, like in an interview, "Then what did I do after that?" I could see the story taking root in Ray's mind as Maryann would plumb her memory. With them there was a sense of play, but, toward the end, with all that booze, it got dark and evil, really destructive.

Douglas Unger:

Ray had suffered from seizures at least twice, with convulsions, just like the character Tiny in "Where I'm Calling From." That's where he got that detail. Ray was terrified to quit drinking then, because of these dangerous seizures when he tried to quit. So that was one of the reasons he kept on drinking.

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Chuck Kinder:

Ray was in and out of hospitals. He had collapsed in a doctor's office. They gave him several stitches and said he had a wet brain.

Maryann Carver:

When alcohol became a problem, he couldn't write. No stories were written when he was desperately drunk. He wrote those stories about people drinking when he was sober.

Douglas Unger:

They were going to separate. Then they were going to stay together. They were going to split up again. A lot of it is shown in the stories in *What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*—the infidelity committed by the man that destroys trust, followed by all the guilt and heavy drinking. I can think of only two or three stories he wrote that were not in some way drawn from incidents in his own life or in his own family.

Maryann Carver:

After *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* was nominated for the National Book Award, and all those reviews came out in *Newsweek, Time,* and elsewhere, it was a shock to me. It was exactly all that we had always prayed for, what we had worked so hard for, sacrificed for, but the fact of the matter was that it was tough to read those reviews and see our lives held up and analyzed. Characters were called "inarticulate members of the working class, involved in violence and doomed to go nowhere," for example; and it was kind of hard for me to relate to this kind of classification. Ray was surprised by it, too.

After all the reviews came out, I read the book again, with new eyes. I felt as if I were in a fishbowl, but that my identity was somehow invisible. However, I could accept the notoriety as long as Ray and I were together.

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It went with my territory, so to speak. Ray and our marriage were my protection and security.

I read many of Ray's later stories and poems with a very thin skin after we'd separated, and I'd see how his family was "done in" for his capital gain. When "Fires" came out, for example, one of our son Vance's professors was so concerned for him that he took him to lunch and tried to comfort him and explain what poetic license was all about.

I know Ray did what he needed to do to write captivating stories and poems. Profit, personal catharsis and hurt to family members were secondary considerations at best. He wrote whatever came to him, and if he could use anything, he did. Later, after Ray became famous, I became supersensitive as to how I was depicted on the page. But now as I look back, I see Ray did not hesitate to portray himself either, in any position, humiliating or not. But he was a man and could get away with it better. He also had a voice. What did it matter if Ray Carver humiliated himself? He *was* Ray Carver.

Life was different than it had been before anybody knew of us, and our lives had not been held up for scrutiny. I always knew Ray was going to be a great writer, and I insisted on that. All the time he was drinking, I'd tell him that it would be the worst catastrophe that could possibly happen if he ended up as a second-rate writer.

Leonard Michaels:

The people he lived with were all participants in his writing. Maryann lived through a hell of a lot of that material with him. She and Ray paid for those stories with their lives.

William Kittredge:

Ray and the late poet Richard Hugo were in so many ways alike. They both were guys writing from a kind of disenfranchisement, some sense of not being part of the

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major-league world. Writing was a way of justifying your life, but at some point in their careers they began to have some success, and both of them had trouble with that success because it forced a change in self-image. They had seen themselves as failures, as people who lived on the margins. For a time, they both reacted as if to say, "If you think I'm terrific, well, watch this." They'd be invited to read at Yale or somewhere and they'd immediately get drunk for two weeks, as if to deny they were this terrific guy who got invited to Yale. It was, I think, a fear of becoming someone else, someone who could negotiate with the world well and easily.

Douglas Unger:

Things fell apart, also, because the children were in such terrible difficulty. His daughter, Chris, and her boyfriend ran into trouble and all of Ray and Maryann's money had to go into bailing her out of her trouble. And with the family problems, there was the guilt he felt that, once again, they had no money. He was so desperate for money that he took a job as clerk in the Tides bookstore in Sausalito, but he didn't stay there for more than a couple of weeks. His hunger for books either ate up too much of his salary, or he was liberally "borrowing" books from the store. He never stopped reading, no matter how much he drank, and he'd bring home armloads of books.

To keep himself sober, he had to get out and get away. He had rented a small apartment on Castro Street in San Francisco. In "Careful" he describes that apartment exactly. He had somehow convinced himself that if he only drank champagne, he'd be able to taper off and quit. He'd go out in the morning and buy bottles of the cheapest Andre, but this wasn't working, and he knew it. We all thought he would keep on drinking until it killed him. And he thought so, too.

He tried to stop drinking from the summer of '76 through the fall and into '77. He would stay with Amy

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and me or with Chuck and Diane Kinder, who had a big apartment across the street. Amy and I rented our flat from the St. James Episcopal Church where meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous were held. Maryann was in recovery first, and was willing to do anything to save Ray. She had heard of a place called Duffy's, an alcoholic rehabilitation center in Myrtledale, California. She was selling the house in Cupertino and had scraped together the money for a rehab center for Ray, and Ray had nowhere else to go.

She and Amy and I drove Ray up to Duffy's. He was scared, terrified that he was going to die if he stopped drinking, or end up brain-damaged from the seizures, the convulsions. But if he kept drinking, the doctors had given him six months and he'd be dead, maybe sooner. I remember when we checked him in at Duffy's, Ray was dead drunk. He'd been drinking all the way up as we drove through the Napa valley. As I recall, he was in rehab for about three weeks the first time.

Ray checked himself out, concerned about the money it cost, and also believing that he had learned enough about the disease of alcoholism that he could quit now. He didn't last long without a drink that first time. For a certain number of alcoholics, especially the heaviest drinkers, their nervous system has become so adjusted to having alcohol that when they stop drinking, they go into seizures as though with epilepsy. These seizures are very dangerous, since brain damage can occur during the convulsions.

Ray moved in with us when he tried to quit drinking again. He'd learned at Duffy's how to taper himself off more safely by having what he called "hummers," time-controlled shots of liquor. Ray had bottles of a kind of booze he hated to drink, the cheapest possible bourbon. There was a time schedule. He'd start with a drink every half hour. Then a day later, he'd taper off to a shot every hour, after that, one every two hours, then later, every three hours, and so on. He gave the bottles to Amy

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and me, so he couldn't get at them, and he explained the schedule. Those days and nights were the lowest for Ray, sitting alone in our living room feeling his marriage was gone, fearing he'd never write again. Whatever he owned—about one carload of books, manuscripts, a few personal items, some old clothing, a few artworks—had been packed in about six boxes and stored in the garage of the church next door.

He'd been at our house a week, tapering off on his hummers, and going to AA meetings at St. James church, when he looked out the window one morning and saw the church was having a bazaar. His few belongings had been spread out on tables in the churchyard, ready to be sold. His manuscripts, his books, his few items of clothing, his artwork. So he and Amy had to go up to the ladies running the bazaar and convince them not to sell them, and get his few belongings back. That evening I found him in our living room, in the dark, crying. That was his bottom; I don't think he ever felt that low again.

When he was off all the hummers and completely dried out, he only hung around San Francisco for a few weeks before he fled north to a house in McKinleyville, the inspiration for the one in "Chef's House," that Richard Day had helped get him. A few months later, he went to Dallas and the Southern Methodist University Writers' Conference, where he met Tess Gallagher for the first time.

Richard Ford, *author:*

I met Ray in Dallas. Nineteen seventy-seven, in the autumn, Southern Methodist had a writers' conference of some sort, and a mutual friend of Ray's and mine, Michael Ryan, invited us. We'd published one book a piece, and didn't know each other, though I'd read some stories of Ray's and liked them, and Ray, God love him, *said* he'd read *A Piece of My Heart,* and maybe he had. Anyway, there were the usual writers' conference high jinx. I remember seeing Ray leave a party one night by climb-

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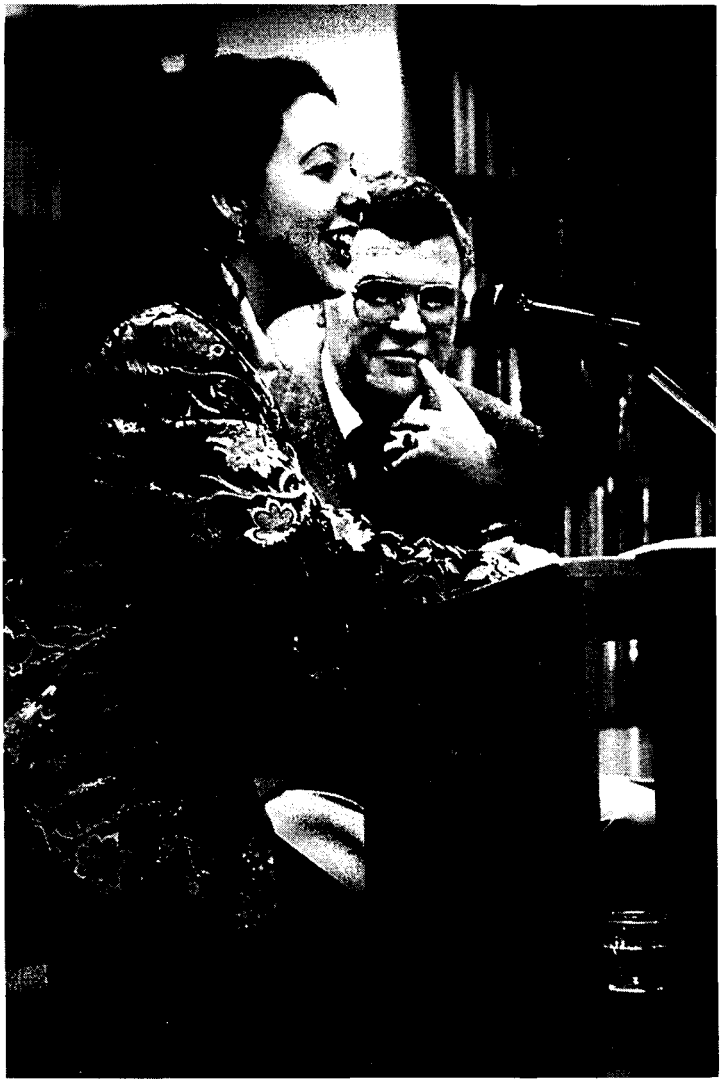

Tess Gallagher and Raymond Carver giving a reading together at the Port Angeles Public Library in Washington state, summer 1986. Photo courtesy of Port Angeles Evening News.

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ing out a window. Two women were involved in that particular exit, one he wanted to see, who was, I believe, going out that window just ahead him; and one he didn't want to see, who was just coming in the front door looking for him. He was sober then, and for good. But he was still Ray. Certain things don't dry up in a person, I guess.

That was a memorable time for me, because Ray and I went on to be great friends for the rest of his life. But it was probably more memorable for Ray because in addition to being out in the world for the first time since he'd been sober, and finding out he could do that, he met Tess Gallagher then. Tess was at the conference, and that's where they first laid eyes on each other. I don't exactly know what Ray's marital situation was then. He was by himself in Dallas, and I'm sure he was still married. And, for truth, he and Tess only met there and palled around like we all did. Their romance didn't spark up until later, when Ray had gone down to El Paso to teach, and Tess was teaching in Tucson.

Ray and I used to say that we were such natural friends, in part, because our families had pretty much been the same kind of people, in fact, were from the very same place. Rural Arkansas. They'd all left there to find work in the thirties. And Tess's family was of that background, too. They were from the Ozarks and eastern Oklahoma, and like Ray's folks, had come out to the Northwest to go to work. I'm not really much of a believer in this kind of destiny. But they were a lot alike, Tess and Ray, in instinctual ways. They knew a lot of the same things, just from growing up the way they did. Writing and literature could be said to have saved them both from perhaps glummer lives. They'd each had their licks. That's not a formula for affection, but still it's not surprising they loved each other so much.

Douglas Unger:

That conference seemed to be a turning point for Ray. He managed to get through his reading, and all

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the socializing, even having the antique, cherrywood bed he was sleeping on collapse into broken sticks under him one night and then trying to hide the damage from his hosts, all without having a drink. He was proud of himself for that. He was openly amazed and surprised by the good reception for his work there. He talked a great deal about Richard Ford, Donald Justice and other writers he had spent time with. Also, there was something already in the air concerning Tess Gallagher. I remember Ray gave Amy and me and many friends T-shirts from the conference. Maryann kept asking him about who Tess Gallagher was, reading her name off the T-shirt, suspicious that Tess seemed to be the only writer he had met that Ray was reticent about. Maryann sensed something had happened between them. Years later, Ray always said that nothing more than a friendly meeting with Tess took place. But it was clear that, in his mind, the seeds were already sewn for their future relationship.

After the conference, Ray returned to the house in McKinleyville. He had a room all set up for writing. He wasn't writing very much, but he had pulled off a kind of scam. He had written an outline for a novel which was something like the German side of the story told in *The African Queen,* and he had received an advance for the book from McGraw-Hill. I'm not sure he had every intention of writing the novel when he wrote the proposal, but anybody could look at this outline, and look at Ray's stories, and wonder how in the world he was going to write that kind of book. He often joked, years later, that he was still getting notes every so often from McGraw-Hill asking how the novel was coming along. He'd tell them it was going just fine.

Maryann went up and lived with him that summer and fall. They went fishing almost every day, visited old friends, played bingo, went to meetings, and he never had a drink again.

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William Kittredge:

I remember asking him after he had been sober for about six months if he had been writing at all. He said, "I can't. I can't convince myself enough that it is worth doing."

Maryann Carver:

I lived with Ray in McKinleyville, California. At Christmastime 1977 Ray saw John Cheever on the Dick Cavett show. He had been close friends with Cheever back in Iowa, had drunk with him, and here was his old friend on TV, sober and successful. It had a great impact. He had already begun to write again, had written "Why Don't You Dance?" and "Viewfinder" there in McKinleyville in "Chef's House" where we were living. Seeing John Cheever on a TV show made Ray want to leave California and go to New York to be a writer there.

Chuck Kinder:

Ray had a teaching job lined up in El Paso. Maryann had some money coming from her teachers'-retirement fund, so she said, "You go off and have a good life in El Paso. I'm going to California." She set him adrift. He got into this old car that his son Vance had left there and drove off and that pretty much was the end of it.

Maryann Carver:

After five treatment centers, Ray was sober from June 3, 1977 to the end of his life. After a sick and shaky start, by the summer of 1978 he was writing again as well as ever, and I checked out in late July 1978 to let him have his life, to experience all he could, because he was forty then, and who knew how long he had. He would always

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say, "I'm going to die young, but you're going to live to be a mean old lady."

You know, not only was I the first lady he ever had, but I can modestly say from the time we were first together that I was his lifelong muse. I wondered what was going to happen after we had divorced—to see where his writing would take off then.

Douglas Unger:

That summer in Iowa City was tough on everyone. Amy and I landed there, broke and without prospects, knowing we could at least get minimal jobs and subsist somehow in that town where we had both gone to graduate school. We joined Ray and Maryann, who were just barely skimping along on some grant money and on his checks from the Goddard College M.F.A. program where he had been teaching. We managed to line up three house-sitting arrangements, complete with lawns to mow and dogs to bail out of the pound. Ray was trying very hard to get his writing going again. Then it seemed the whole family came crashing in, his son, his mother-in-law, everyone with needs and problems. There was chaos and turmoil, with a major move every month. How he managed to stay sober through all of this was a miracle. Ray had a word for the kind of life we were living. He called it *milling.* "We're all just milling around and getting nowhere," he'd say.

He was terribly frustrated. And he and Maryann were fighting. Ray took off in a rush for El Paso, where he had a job waiting. Maryann left him then, for the last time, to go back to California. Ray's old car broke down on the way to El Paso. As the story goes, Tess Gallagher rescued him. It was there that they struck up that working partnership that lasted for the rest of his life.

That was a strange crossroads for him, and really a kind of paradigm of how he lived. Ray told me that when that old car broke down, he traded it for a bicycle, traded it

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right on the spot. That's the way it was with him—disaster happened, but then he had a great story about how he had once actually traded his car for a bicycle.

Geoffrey Wolff, *critic and novelist:*

Ray was a great liar, a wonderful liar. Ray, Richard Ford, my brother Toby and I once sailed my boat to Block Island. We went ashore the next morning to do some drinking, but of course Ray couldn't be interested in that. He stayed on board but he wanted to know where the coffee was. I told him the stove was pretty complicated, that it could easily blow up and so I'd bring him back some coffee since I didn't want him to use the stove. He said, "Oh, Jesus, I wouldn't dream of touching that stove. I don't need the coffee that bad anyway." So we left and went into town and drifted into a bar. My brother wanted to talk about literature, and Richard and I wanted to talk about the waitresses at the bar, The Oar. When we went back to the boat, we brought along one of them to take our picture. As the dinghy approached, I noticed Ray back in the stern of the boat, as far back as he could go, looking awful, covered with soot. I asked him what the hell had happened. He said, "Don't worry about a thing. I've just been shooting smack into my eyeballs." The waitress was terrified, didn't know he was joking. I went below to get my camera. Below decks it used to be all white, but now it was covered with black soot everywhere, completely black. I was very cross. I said, "Jesus, Ray, why did you have to light that stove?" And he said, "What are you talking about? I didn't do a damn thing." I said, "Come on, Ray, you lit that stove." "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "I was asleep. Maybe someone came aboard." I told him to look down below. He said, "That's just the way it looked when you guys left." It took me and my sons ten years to scrape all that damn soot off, to scour that boat down clean. Sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't have left it the

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way it was that day in the harbor at Block Island—Carvered.

Douglas Unger:

When Geoffrey Wolff reviewed *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* in the *New York Times,* Ray called me up and said, "Did you see that? Would you believe it? Who would have thought it five years ago?" With every good review or piece of good news, he was like a child at Christmas. After so many years of rejection, the financial struggles, the drinking, even giving up writing, now when he least expected it, the world embraced him. He never ceased to be amazed at that.

Leonard Michaels:

His early work is more musical. More terrifying. Terrifying in the Kierkegaardian sense, like life itself. Actually, forget that.

When his work came out there were heavy blows at first. There's a Russian saying: "When you enter the city, the geese begin to cackle." A number of established sensibilities didn't want him in the city. But then some big names weighed in on his side. Soon thereafter right opinion seized the mental masses, high and low.

Geoffrey Wolff:

I wasn't more than three sentences into the first story in the collection, before I knew I was hearing a voice I'd never heard before. Not merely what people mean when they say they know what a minimalist is—a taker-outer rather than a putter-inner. Ray liked to lean things down, but not always. He was certainly capable of being a putter-inner too. Stanley Elkin said a wonderful thing: "Less is less. More is more. And enough is enough." Ray wrote enough.

Douglas Unger:

After they moved to Syracuse, Tess was instrumental in getting his life organized. From all the chaos of the

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past, Tess was able to step in and establish order, manage things so Ray wouldn't have to worry about bill collectors or other distractions—how to make ends meet, or how to find writing time. Tess would unplug the phone and later put up a sign that said, "No Visitors." Ray wrote much of the main body of his work during this new life.

I had a chance to get a close look at his work patterns, when I first visited him in Syracuse in the Spring of 1982. We were writing a screen treatment together, a possible project for the director Richard Pearce. Ray was then hard at work on finishing stories for his collection *Cathedral* and had another screenplay going about the life of Dostoyevski. He was always up very early in the morning. He stayed at his desk long periods of time then with little breaks for meals and coffee. He said that he preferred, if he could, when working on a first draft to get it all down in one sitting. Then he could tinker away at that

The photo taken by Cassandra, the waitress from The Oar. Clockwise from left: Richard Ford, Raymond Carver, and brothers Tobias and Geoffrey Wolff on Geoffrey's boat, at Block Island, R.I.

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draft with great patience, month after month, never seeming to tire of making changes.

Later, he told me how he worked on poems, sometimes so hard at it that he could get a draft of one poem in the morning, and another in the afternoon. Two poems in a day! He was astounded and satisfied with how productive he was. He'd be whipped out afterward, exhausted, of course. Then he would keep several poems going in the rewriting stages. As far as I know, Tess read them and made comments on them, and he did much the same for her, an atmosphere between them as though they were sharing their secrets.

Sometimes, when he talked about his work, which wasn't often, Tess would jump into the conversation and claim something as her own. "He got that story from me," she often said about "Cathedral." Or the detail of the woman, Olla, and the grotesque plaster casting of her teeth before her husband had them fixed in "Feathers." "That's mine," Tess would say. The macabre casting of her own teeth was right there, brought down off a bookshelf and shown off to prove her case.

They worked together very intimately. It was a quiet, peaceful life. Ray had an unnatural paranoia about the telephone ringing, and sometimes he would bury the phone rather than simply unplug it. He would take the receiver off the hook, shove the phone in a drawer, muffle it with dish towels, then shut the drawer on it before he was satisfied. "The telephone rings and your life changes," he'd say. It was clearly implied that he had had enough changes in his life by then. He wanted to stay pretty much fixed in one place, in his study. She would rove around the house from one writing place to another, wandering as she wrote, and there were at least five good spaces set up for writing in their Syracuse home.

He got a lot of work done, seriously, living and breathing, it seemed, only to write during those years he divided between his house in Syracuse and his homes in Port Angeles. When he got the Strauss Living Award

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from the American Academy, he was able to redouble his writing efforts. He was so relieved not to have to teach, which he never really felt comfortable doing. He was proud of himself that he could now spend almost all of his time writing. And, in my opinion, writing poetry, more than fiction, was his first love. Even after Ray was turned down for financial aid as a young poet that year at Iowa, he never gave up his youthful dream of being accepted by the world as a poet. Later, writing poetry was the open expression of his new freedom, from alcoholism, from financial insecurity, from family troubles. There was also something of his outlaw mentality involved. The world seemed to be pressuring him to write more fiction, even after he had spent months concentrating only on his stories, painstakingly laboring away at them, through as many as fifteen or more drafts. But Ray was going to write what he felt like writing. He wasn't going to compromise his instincts now. The more he felt pressured by critics and editors and even his friends to write fiction, the more he used his new freedom to turn back to writing poems with joy and with a vengeance.

Tobias Wolff, *author:*

For the two or three years before he moved to Syracuse Ray was all over the map, living here, living there. But when he got to Syracuse he dug right in. He was determined to make a home for himself, a place where he could live in peace and have his friends over for some gossip and get his work done. And so he did. When I think of Ray in those years, I think of comfort—I think of a sleek, pampered cat preening by the fire, slit-eyed with contentment.

He loved fires. He'd have a fire going from September till June, and on cool nights in the summer. Once I was over visiting and the fire was burning low and he went down to the basement for more wood. He was down there a long time, and all the while I kept hearing these terrible crashing sounds. Finally I decided I'd better investigate, and what he was doing, he was lifting these big

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logs over his head and smashing them down on the cement floor until they split. I said, "Jesus, Ray, why don't you use an ax?" "I will," he said, a little impatient. "I will. I've been meaning to get one."

That's how he'd been splitting his firewood for at least a year, maybe two.

Fires and candy. If he had a fire and some good chocolate, Ray was in heaven. He was a boy, a very large boy. And like a boy, he didn't always want to share. He could be pretty cagey with his candy—cagey and secretive. On Halloween he turned all the lights out and pretended he wasn't home so he wouldn't have to shell out to the kids. Catherine and I brought our sons over one year and gave them permission to bang on the door and throw gravel at the windows until he showed himself, which he finally did, in a bathrobe, pretending he'd been asleep. He tried to buy them off with some peppermint drops but Catherine and I kept badgering him to break out his stash. Finally he gave in and let the boys have some of his better confections. He was laughing like crazy. He loved it when someone really got his number.

He was content, happy with Tess and his work and the respect his work began to inspire in all kinds of people. He grew fat on the land, but not arrogant. His manner was open and gentle and somewhat cunning. He never killed off the rascal in him, but he didn't let the rascal run his life. He knew exactly how fragile the peace was. In the best of times—sitting around the fire with friends, telling stories—he unfailingly wonderingly, said, "Things could be worse." He knew whereof he spoke. He knew the value of this gift of quiet time, and he didn't waste a minute of it. Look at what he did in those last ten years. When I drove by his house in those days I could feel him at work in there.

Jay McInerney, *author, former student of Carver's:*

I first met him here in New York. Oddly enough, it was the day that John Lennon died. I opened the door of

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my apartment in Greenwich Village, and standing there was Raymond Carver, who at that time was my favorite writer. It wasn't quite as coincidental and weird as that. My friend Gary Fisketjon was working at that time as an editor at Random House and he had had lunch with Carver. After lunch Ray didn't really have much to do so Gary called me up and asked if I would take Raymond Carver around and show him the city. I thought he was kidding and hung up on him. Within moments there was a knock on my door and there was this giant bear of a man in my door frame. We just sat down and started talking about one thing or another, mainly about books and writing, and never stopped.

He'd been through so much by the time I met him, and he'd come out the other side. He insisted that what he'd been through had only distracted him from writing. I think his writing improved as he sobered up, so he was also a steadying influence on my life, in giving me a model of the writer who wasn't a self-destructing meteor. Living in New York I had felt I was in the center of the media and publishing world. Sometimes it's easy to confuse that with the literary world. The literary world exists wherever there is a man or a woman alone in a room writing. I was a little foolish in confusing the one thing with the other.

Ray said if I really wanted to make it as a serious writer, commit myself to the act of writing fiction, I would have to arrange my life accordingly. He felt that living in New York and having to support myself in the most expensive city in the country was draining away a lot of my energy. I changed my whole life to follow him to Syracuse, hardly at the top of my list of favorite places to live if Ray hadn't been there.

I think it's quite possible that if I hadn't met Ray I would have gone down another road. I'd be an editor of a magazine today or something like that. One thing Ray did for me was to pound away at the idea that the only way to be a good writer was to write every day, sit down

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and put black on white. Sometimes he'd even call me up and ask, "Did you write today?" Many years later as a joke, I called him to ask if he'd written that day and he said,"No—you have to write every day until you *are* a writer, then you can take a day off every now and then."

Ray was a somewhat unwilling teacher. He almost didn't trust himself to give advice. He thought it strange that so many American writers supported themselves by teaching. On the other hand, he thought it was better than sweeping floors or pumping gas, which he had done in the past.

William Kittredge:

William Abrams, in his introduction to the O. Henry collection in which "A Small Good Thing" was the lead story, said something about the courage of Ray to take a brief story from his previous book and enlarge it this way. Well, in fact it was just the opposite. He had written the story, but his editor Gordon Lish had cut it down to the short version. The short version of that story is enormously diminished in its emotional power. It's no coincidence that, when he was able to, Ray changed contractual agreements, changed editors and all that. As he told me afterward, "They can't change a comma from now on."

Richard Ford:

He would listen to his editors—Chip McGrath at *The New Yorker* for one, a man he admired very much. He certainly listened to Tess. Finally, though, it doesn't make much difference how the stories came into being, because they were Ray's and only Ray's.

Jay McInerney:

It was with some trepidation that I first visited Syracuse along with Gary, to try to find a place for me to live. We were to stay with Ray and Tess for the weekend, but I was driving this old MG that kept overheating, and we

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arrived late. Ray had already eaten one supper but he was happy to join us for another. He liked five or six meals a day and often said his idea of heaven was breakfast anytime. I remember his grace—"Here's hoping the phone don't ring and the food don't get cold—Amen." A big old carton of milk sat on the table. While we were eating Ray told us about his visitor the weekend before—a friend of Tess's, a blind man. He couldn't get over it—it seemed to him the most extraordinary condition, the man's blindness, he just could't take it for granted. He told us how the guy smoked, which made Ray wonder if it was as much fun when you could't *see* the smoke. That was one of Ray's great gifts—he hardly took anything for granted. Some of us might try to be cool about having a blind man visit, but not Ray. He told us how the first thing he'd done, before he realized his mistake, was ask the blind man if he sat on the right or left side of the train coming up from New York—the left being the scenic, river side. Ray was basically telling stories on himself, making fun of his own reactions to having a blind man around. It was very funny stuff, but you could see he was agitated by the experience too. He was trying out the material.

Tobias Wolff:

When I read "Cathedral" for the first time I was lying on a couch, and when I came to the end I had the feeling that I was levitating. Of course, literally, I wasn't; but I felt as if I were lifting off the couch. I was so charged by the story and drawn up by it that I ran to the phone and spent about half an hour trying to track Ray down. I finally found him at Yaddo, and I had to tell him what he'd done to me.

Douglas Unger:

So many people all over the world are still just discovering his work. In Buenos Aires there's a bookshop that also serves coffee and sandwiches. They serve a salad

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called "The Carver" and a sandwich called "Cathedral." The Cathedral Sandwich is cheese and lettuce on white bread—the simplest things. Ray's on a restaurant menu in Argentina. . . .

Leonard Michaels:

When I last saw him in Port Townsend, it was quite clear that he was enjoying himself enormously. He looked very very good, in an Eddie Bauer country-gentleman outfit. He had this big Mercedes and he told me about his two boats. He was triumphant and his French editor was right there walking around, admiring Ray every minute.

Mona Simpson, author of *Anywhere but Here:*

I never paid for a meal. Neither did anyone else when Ray was around. I met him in his second life. He was what William James called "the twice born" and he had a childlike gratitude, a sort of caved-in look to his mouth. Restaurants, taxis, coats, good cars—they were all a joke and a toy to him.

I met Ray at a reading he gave in New York. I was a first-year graduate student at Columbia but one of his students invited me along to the dinner afterward. When Ray guest-edited an issue of *Ploughshares,* he accepted a short story of mine, the first I ever published. He knew how to save people from small humiliations. He edited a few lines and called me up about the changes; then he sent his suggestions so I could see them on the page, sent them overnight mail. He never lost his joy at publishing one story in a journal only a few faithful readers would ever see and he protected that feeling in others. He knew how a writer can feel smallest in his moment of victory. That was what was best about Ray: he knew how to celebrate. "That's one for our side!" he'd say. He never stopped feeling like one of the unfortunates, one of the guilty undeserving. He was too far in. None of his people were getting lucky. And so he had this mischievous, incredulous laugh. "Here's one for our side."

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He never forgot the others. He could bitch and gossip but never blame.

I visited Ray and Tess once in Port Angeles but he never took me fishing. Once in a while, though, in the dead of winter, I'd get a padded envelope with Ray's little up-slanted writing on it. Inside, in a plastic vacuum pack, would be a side of a smoked salmon. He'd catch a bunch of fish and send some to each of his friends.

Jay McInerney:

I came to Syracuse just as he was starting to be showered with laurels, and so we were always celebrating some new triumph of Ray's or Tess's in their big old Victorian house. It was a lovely thing to behold, the genuine happiness of Ray's later life. Shortly after I moved down the street the world started knocking at Ray's door, and eventually he and Tess had to retreat a little to get their work done. Tess would sometimes check into a motel down on Eerie Boulevard when she was really cooking on a project, but Ray liked his creature comforts and he'd stay at home, not always answering the door or the phone. It was kind of ironic, here was a man who, like so many of the characters in his stories, used to be afraid to answer the door for fear of bill collectors, now reverting to his old furtive behavior because some reporter from the Frankfurter *Zeitung* had flown all the way to Syracuse to get an interview with the master. The really funny thing is that I would always see him looking out from behind the curtains to see if it was safe.

Ray and Tess had a famous sign they put out when they were working—a big painted piece of sheetrock which said NO VISITORS PLEASE. It was born one morning after I paid, or tried to pay, a late night visit. I had a girl visiting me from New York one weekend shortly after I moved to Syracuse. We went out to dinner and had a few drinks. Suddenly it seemed absolutely essential to me to introduce this girl to Ray and Tess, or vice versa. Or maybe it was her idea, I can't remember. Anyway, we

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rolled up the hill to their house. It was probably ten-thirty or eleven o'clock at night, which in New York is, or was, a perfectly respectable hour to visit your friends. There were a couple of lights on, so we thought nothing of hammering on the door. After the second set of knocks I realized they weren't coming, although my escort was not easily dissuaded. She wanted to meet Ray. She gave the door a few more good whacks. Finally I convinced her to retreat, realizing that the Carver-Gallagher household was perhaps on a different schedule than we were. I was now worried that they would know it was me who had shattered their sleep. I snuck away, hoping no one was looking out the window and trying to subdue my boisterous companion.

I woke up the next morning mortified. I didn't want to go near Ray's house but my girlfriend insisted, unable to understand my reluctance. Finally we walked up to the house to be greeted with the freshly painted NO VISITORS PLEASE sign. A week later Mona Simpson came up to visit and to interview Ray for the *Paris Review;* she put the sign in her introduction. I never told anyone how it came into being, though Ray liked to tell his version. When I finally worked up the courage a few days later to visit, he told me how a bunch of students had pounded on his door at midnight. "Can you believe that?" Ray asked. "Twelve-thirty in the morning for God's sake, pounding on the door." I shook my head nervously. "Terrible," I said. "So we decided to make that sign," Tess explained. Later I would hear Ray improve on the story. A gang of thesis-hunting graduate students from out of town kicking the door at one in the morning. A team of drunken Manhattan journalists seeking an interview at two in the morning. And so on. I felt sort of ashamed about it, and then I forgot and never got to tell him the real story.

Douglas Unger:

He was fascinated by this turnaround and by the smallest kinds of pleasures it enabled him to enjoy. He'd check

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into a nice hotel room in New York. He'd laugh and quote his version of the Pinter line, "A person feels like he has a chance in a room like this." Just going out to dinner was a big occasion. And he'd always want to share this feeling with his friends.

Leonard Michaels:

He may have intended to sound that way only to hold off the demonic forces, the ones that are sure to punish you if you take any pleasure in anything in your life.

Douglas Unger:

There is a tremendous sadness in Maryann now, and there has been for some time, about how the world considers her relationship with Ray. She read all the reviews describing these down-and-out people in Ray's work, treating them like ragged lowlifes, most of them, saying how heartbreaking they were. Maryann is a proud, capable woman, an educated person, has a master's degree, and can quote from Jung and Blake and the major poets off the top of her head. She was his first sounding board, and helped to edit all those early poems and stories. She worked for nineteen years to keep Ray and the family together. Then to see their lives and his work so refracted and distorted to the world by critics, reviewers, and now even biographers, to see the most intimate portions of their lives shown in Ray's work treated that way, all of that really hurt her pride. That's what Ray's story "Intimacy" is about, the writer asking forgiveness for having allowed their lives to be so used and abused in his stories and by the world. Then, of course, there is the ironic twist of making use of that very apology as fresh meat for another story.

William Kittredge:

He knew he owed Maryann a great debt. She had kept his life together for years and years. She'd helped him imaginatively, yet she was clearly portrayed in many of those stories in all kinds of unflattering ways. He used

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her so ruthlessly in those stories. It's just so sad that after a long series of emotional betrayals of various kinds, great anger developed. It got so that they couldn't be in the same room together, essentially. Ray felt great sadness, but it made his life impossible to live, impossible for him to work, impossible for him to do the things he felt he had to do. He knew he had to do his work, but back there all the time was somebody he had left behind. They'd been entwined in an emotional compact about getting the work done yet he was the one who had walked away with all the skills. One gets to leave with all the success, and the other gets to stand out in the rain.

Douglas Unger:

I was at Yaddo when "Errand" came out, and it so happened there was a copy of Henri Troyat's biography of Chekhov around. James Salter noticed that the death scene in the biography and a large part of the death scene in "Errand" were almost exactly alike, almost word for word. That caused quite a stir and discussion among the writers there. Ray had read the biography, was fascinated by it, and had decided to use it when he got the idea for his story. To his mind, it was no different than using parts of a story one of his friends had told him around the table. The interesting thing is that he turned it so completely into a Ray Carver story. He laughed at how someone had actually caught him at it, then said he might just do that same kind of story with the biographies of other writers he admired, like de Maupassant, Dostoyevski and Kafka.

After he finished the manuscript of *Where I'm Calling From,* he wanted more than anything to complete another book of poems. A lot of people kept urging him to write less poetry and more fiction but he wasn't sure if he had another story in him. He told me that he had to fill his well again; for Ray that always meant going back to writing poetry.

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Jay McInerney:

One of the things I learned from reading Ray's critics is how often even our best literature is caricatured. And how even a writer as widely admired as Ray is so often misunderstood, even when he is being praised. Some of us felt frustrated by what we considered to be the awkwardness and stupidities of some of the more casual criticism, though overall I'd say it was a joy to see so good a writer so well appreciated.

Richard Ford:

In the summer of '87, Kristina and I and Tess and Ray had been to England and France together. We had a very good time, but I noticed Ray looked thin and kind of gaunt. I had a sense that something was amiss with him. Ray was never a healthy-seeming man. He ate horrible things, smoked a million cigarettes, he'd been through the ravages of liquor. He'd given his body a lot of big whacks. Sometimes I'd go over to his house and he'd go to the store and come back with a sack of doughnuts and Twinkies and God knows what else. I'd say, "Jeez, Ray, I hate to see you buy that stuff," and he'd say, "You'll feel different about it at twelve o'clock tonight."

Chuck Kinder:

One night he called me up and told me. He told me that he had something dark down there.

Geoffrey Wolff:

He was going to be operated on for lung cancer; they had to crack his chest and I'd had my chest cracked during my heart surgery and I wanted to tell him as much as he wanted to know about that particular operation. He asked me some questions about it, but he also told me exactly what he did not want to know about it. I'd want to know all I could; after all, knowledge is power. But not Ray. He wanted, as he said, to wake up three months later and find out it was all fixed, that it was all over.

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Douglas Unger:

Amy and I had lunch with Ray, the day before his surgery. He seemed in good spirits, and optimistic, hoping for the best. Then when the food came, it was like the reality of his condition hit him. His face turned gray. A dark and somber mood came over us all and we fell silent. Ray was staring down at his food, fixed on it sadly, stirring his spoon around and around. We asked him if he was all right. "I'm looking at this soup and thinking I'm in the soup," he said.

The next morning, very early, Amy and I and Tess were at St. Joseph's hospital. Ray was waiting in his room, all prepped, with like a blue shower cap on his head. He had been given his first injections, which were making him drowsy. He held hands with each of us in turn. He was joking with us, too, philosophically, looking back at his life. He had spoken often of the years of his youth, and later of his alcoholism, as "the old life." There were the years in Syracuse and Port Angeles; sober years of literary success, which he called "the new life." He spoke of each of these lives he had lived, and how lucky he thought he had been, how amazing it seemed to him, clear in this how much he had loved his life, and it seemed as though he were ready now for anything. When the orderly came to wheel him off to his surgery, we all hugged and kissed him, wished him luck. He smiled at us sleepily. "I'm on to my next new life," he said.

Leonard Michaels:

His surgeon told Ray he had read his stories. He had loved them.

Douglas Unger:

When they gave him his honorary doctorate at the University of Hartford, he turned to everyone and said, "Well, it's Dr. Carver now. You'll all have to start calling me doctor." It was just over two months before he died.

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From Hartford, he went on to give a reading at the Endicott bookstore and sign copies of *Where I'm Calling From.* People were spilling out into the street. He was exhausted from the illness and could barely read, but he signed books for hours. The next day, he was inducted into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. That was a miracle to him. Then there was another book signing at the Scribner's bookstore. About twenty writers were there signing books, but there were as many people lined up at Ray's table, waiting for a handshake and signature, as you might see in line for a first-run movie. He kept turning to me and saying, "Can you believe this? Isn't this just amazing? Who would have thought this?" Finally, they had to shut the bookstore down. We were out in the street later, and there were still people waiting.

Ray had managed to convince both the press and his editors that he had beaten his cancer. Up until mid-June, maybe he had even convinced himself, as well as the world, that he had beaten it. He'd say, "I feel fine. I'm getting stronger every day."

Maryann Carver:

He did not want to die, of course. But I think he had written out all his themes and didn't have a whole lot more to say, or he would have stuck around to do it. I think his higher self knew when it was time to go—at the very pinnacle of his life as far as his career was concerned.

The last time I saw him alive was April 22, 1988 when he was receiving radiation treatment in Seattle. Chris, our daughter, and her little girls, Windy and Chloe, and I went down to see him. I had received a letter from him earlier, right after he'd had his surgery, in which he had tried to counsel me and advise me how to behave, consolidate property, and so on, now that we were sort of over the hill. When I read that, I thought, well, speak for yourself. I was very saddened to read that negative letter,

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for, after all, I did not think that was the right attitude for fighting cancer.

So I was determined when I went to The Four Seasons in Seattle to meet for lunch that I'd show him. I got this absolutely stunning outfit from this store in town called A Touch of Class, and wore incredible gold earrings from Turkey that four people in the restaurant complimented me on. A friend said I looked like I'd just stepped out of a Ferrari.

We arrived before he did, so I waited for him up on the balcony, and when he walked in, oh, it was the most tragic sight I had ever, ever, ever seen. His face was so swollen from the steroids he had been taking. He had a big coat on, with a scarf around his neck, and a cap to cover his loss of hair from the radiation treatments. He looked at me and tears flooded his eyes. He said, "If you're not a sight for sore eyes."

But then he managed to put on a real party for the little girls. Ray insisted we all have a different dessert; then we took a bite of everyone else's as we laughed and enjoyed the treats. We were thrilled to be together, holding hands as we ate. They all looked at me at the beginning of the meal, so I said grace. I finished by saying, " . . . in Jesus's name." At one time, Ray would have been embarrassed perhaps, but he was right in there this time. I told him it was important to pray in Jesus's name because it was the consciousness involved and invoked, as well as the literal instruction of Jesus in the Bible. I said a prayer for his life and health, and we all very solemnly and sensitively said "Amen."

Later that afternoon I gave him a Reiki treatment. He would have scoffed at that too in the past. Reiki in the first degree is the laying-on-of-hands technique that Jesus used to heal. It was rediscovered by a Japanese Christian professor, Dr. Mikao Usui, after many years of research. Ray laid his head on the palms of my hands and, ironically, I was holding the exact part of his head where he was daily being zapped with radiation treatments. My

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hands got hot. And he absolutely loved lying with his head in my lap, his head in my hands. He kept saying, "This feels so good, oh, this feels so good."

Chuck Kinder:

Ray had a premonition long ago that he'd die young. I'm not into this touchy-feely business, but I think that was pretty genuine.

Douglas Unger:

During the last month of his life, we talked with Ray only a few times on the telephone. When asked about his illness, he kept saying he was doing well, his hair was growing back after the radiation treatments, and he was working hard on his new book of poems. That continued to be his news for everyone. But there were so many hints that this wasn't true. Amy and I were stricken by a house fire in Idaho in which our two German shepherds died and we just barely got out alive. Ray was concerned for us, offered us money and help, if we needed it, and we thanked him. At one point in the conversation, he said mysteriously, "I'm thinking a lot about those dogs."

We wanted to come to Port Angeles to visit, and had tentatively planned a visit for early August in any case, but he told us no, he was on his way to Alaska for a salmon fishing expedition to celebrate completing the manuscript of his book of poems of *A New Path to the Waterfall.* He sounded happy, and satisfied, and said, "Wish me luck." He told us to take care and promised to catch a big one for us.

Maryann Carver:

We'd both long before given up our personal selves for his literature. In a sense I've lost my identity, and now Ray is dead; but I think Ray did his job in this life.

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The Index

J.G. Ballard

EDITOR'S NOTE. From abundant internal evidence it seems clear that the text printed below is the index to the unpublished and perhaps suppressed autobiography of a man who may well have been one of the most remarkable figures of the twentieth century. Yet of his existence nothing is publicly known, although his life and work appear to have exerted a profound influence on the events of the past fifty years. Physician and philosopher, man of action and patron of the arts, sometime claimant to the English throne and founder of a new religion, Henry Rhodes Hamilton was evidently the intimate of the greatest men and women of our age. After World War II he founded a new movement of spiritual regeneration, but private scandal and public concern at his growing megalomania, culminating in his proclamation of himself as a new divinity, seem to have led to his downfall. Incarcerated within an unspecified government institution, he presumably spent his last years writing his autobiography of which this index is the only surviving fragment.

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A substantial mystery still remains. Is it conceivable that all traces of his activities could be erased from our records of the period? Is the suppressed autobiography itself a disguised *roman à clef,* in which the fictional hero exposes the secret identities of his historical contemporaries? And what is the true role of the indexer himself, clearly a close friend of the writer, who first suggested that he embark on his autobiography? This ambiguous and shadowy figure has taken the unusual step of indexing himself into his own index. Perhaps the entire compilation is nothing more than a figment of the overwrought imagination of some deranged lexicographer. Alternatively, the index may be wholly genuine, and the only glimpse we have into a world hidden from us by a gigantic conspiracy, of which Henry Rhodes Hamilton is the greatest victim.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

J.G. Ballard's collection of short stories, *War Fever*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in April. His stories have appeared in *Omni, Interview, Ambit* and *Bananas*. He lives in Shepperton, England.

Evan S. Connell is the author of fifteen books, including *Son of the Morning Star* and *Mrs. Bridge*. He won an award in literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1987. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Tatyana Tolstaya is a Soviet writer who is currently spending a year in the United States. Her first book of short stories, *On the Golden Porch*, was published by Knopf (1989). **Jamey Grambrell**, her translator, is a free-lance writer and translator living in New York City. She is a contributing editor of *Art in America* and has contributed translations to Joseph Brodsky's most recent collection of poetry, *To Urania*.

POETRY

Diane Ackerman's new book of prose, *A Natural History of the Senses*, was recently published by Random House. *Jaguar of Sweet Laughter: New & Selected Poems* (Random House) will be published in June, and a collection of her natural history essays from the *New Yorker* will be published in September.

John Ashbery is the author of thirteen books of poetry, including the forthcoming *Flow Chart* (Knopf), and a volume of art criticism, *Reported Sightings* (Knopf, 1989). His *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975), won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, the National Book Award and the National

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Book Critics' Circle Award. He has been named a Guggenheim Fellow and a MacArthur Fellow, and is chancellor of The Academy of American Poets. In 1989 and 1990 he was Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. He is currently Charles P. Stevenson, Jr. Professor of Literature at Bard College.

Randy Blasing's fourth collection of poems, *The Double House of Life,* and his fifth volume of translation, Nazim Hikmet's *Selected Poetry* were published by Persea Books. He is a recent Ingram Merrill Fellow and lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

Don Bogen's first book of poetry, *After the Spendid Display,* was published by Wesleyan University Press in 1986. His poems have appeared in *The New Republic, The Nation* and *Poetry.* He is a recent recipient of an NEA Fellowship and a grant from the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and teaches at the University of Cincinnati.

Eavan Boland lives in Dublin with her husband and two daughters. Her book *Outside History: Poems 1980-1990* was published by W.W. Norton in 1990.

Lucie Brock-Broido's first book of poems, *A Hunger,* was published by Knopf in 1988. Poems from her *Master Letters* series have appeared in *The Kenyon Review* and will be published in the *American Poetry Review.* She is a Briggs-Copland Assistant Professor in Poetry at Harvard University.

Ibn Darraj al-Qastalli (958-1030) is an Arab Andalusian poet from Cordova. **Leticia Garza-Falcón** was raised in the Rio Grande Valley. She is a teacher of Chicano literature and a graduate student of comparative literature at the University of Texas. **Christopher Middleton** is an English poet and translator. He has published numerous translations from German. His most recent collection is *Selected Writings* (Carcanet, 1989). He has been living in Texas since 1966. Their translations are from Spanish versions by Emilio García Gómez of a thirteenth century Arabic anthology.

Mark Halliday was recently denied tenure at the University of Pennsylvania. His book of poems *Little Star* was a National Poetry Series selection in 1987. His book on Wallace Stevens will be published by Princeton this year.

John Hollander's most recent book of poetry is *Harp Lake* (Knopf). He is a professor of English at Yale University.

Helena Kaminski is a graduate student of comparative literature at Harvard University. Her poems have appeared in *The Harvard Quarterly.* Her work will appear in *New Directions 55.*

A.M. Krich is the author of a book of poetry, *All Here Are on Vacation* (Citadel Press), and a novel, *Sweethearts* (Crown). He has published poetry intermittently, most notably in *Cross-Section, 1947: Annual of New*

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American Writing and recently in *The Massachusetts Review.* He lives in Leeds, Massachusetts.

Mark Levine's work has appeared recently in *Black Warrior Review, Denver Quarterly, The New Yorker* and *Ploughshares.* He lives in Iowa.

William Logan's most recent book of poetry *Sullen Weedy Lakes* was published by Godine in 1988. He was the winner of the Peter I.B. Lavan Award of the Academy of American Poets.

Ibn Sara (d.1123) is an Arab Andalusian poet who lived in Santarén.

David Sheppard grew up on a farm in Chowchilla, California and now lives in Boulder, Colorado. This is his first publication in the U.S.A.

Enid Shomer's poems have appeared in such journals as *Poetry, Ploughshares, Tikkun* and *New Letters.* Her collection *Stalking the Florida Panther* won The Word Works book prize. A 1989 NEA Fellow in Poetry, she recently won the Celia B. Wagner Award of the Poetry Society of America. An hour-long segment of "The Poet and the Poem" devoted to her work has been broadcast by the Voice of America.

Terese Svoboda is a video artist living in New York City. Her most recent book, *Laughing Africa,* was cowinner of the 1989 Iowa Poetry Prize.

Eric Trethewey's new book of poems, *Evening Knowledge,* will be published by the Cleveland State University Poetry Center this year. His poems have appeared in *The Atlantic, Ploughshares* and *The Kenyon Review,* and his screenplay, *The Home Waltz,* was a recent winner in the Virginia Governor's Screenwriting Competition. He lives in the mountains of southwest Virginia and teaches at Hollins College.

Theodore Weiss's most recent volume of poetry is *From Princeton One Autumn Afternoon: Collected Poems* (Macmillan, 1988). He has just completed another manuscript entitled *A Sum of Destructions.* He and his wife Renée publish and edit the *Quarterly Review of Literature,* now in its forty-seventh year.

John Yau's most recent collection is *Radiant Silhouette: New and Selected Work: 1974-1988* (Black Sparrow Press, 1989). He has received awards from the Academy of American Poets, General Electric Foundation and the New York State Foundation for the Arts in 1988. He lives in New York and writes regularly for *Artforum.*

Ibn Zamrak (1333-1393) is an Arab Andalusian poet.

FEATURES

Anthony Burgess lives in Monaco and Lugano with his wife Liana. He is the author of many novels including *A Clockwork Orange, Earthly Powers,* and the Enderby novels. He has written over fifty books and is now

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gaining recognition as a composer, with recent premiers of his musical works "Concerto Grosso for Guitars and Orchestra" and "Marche pour une Révolution."

Sam Halpert *(Raymond Carver feature)* is a retired typographer now taking it easy in South Miami. A longtime admirer of Jack Daniels, he has published short stories in *The Kansas Quarterly* and *The Aspen Flyer*. His book, *. . .when we talk about Raymond Carver*, is forthcoming from Peregrine Smith Books.

Ben Sonnenberg started *Grand Street* in 1981 and was its editor until spring 1990. "I See a Woman May Be Made a Fool" is taken from *Lost Property, Memoirs & Confessions of a Bad Boy* which Summit Books is publishing in May.

INTERVIEWS

George Plimpton (Tom Wolfe interview) is the editor of *The Paris Review*. His most recent book, *The Best of Plimpton*, was released this winter by Atlantic Monthly Press.

Antonio Weiss (Harold Bloom interview) is a senior editor at The Paris Review.

ART

Joan Mitchell was born in Chicago in 1926, and lives in Vetheuil, France. Recent exhibitions of her work have been held at the Robert Miller Gallery, New York; Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Allen Ruppersberg was born in Cleveland in 1944, and currently lives in New York. His work was recently shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; John Weber Gallery, New York; and Christine Burgin Gallery, New York.

Mark Tansey was born in San Jose, California, in 1949, and lives in New York. Exhibitions of his paintings and drawings have been held at the Seattle Art Museum; Kunsthalle Basel; and Curt Marcus Gallery, New York.

ERRATA

The Paris Review regrets that due to an editorial oversight, the portfolio in issue 116, "Studies for Amerika: For the People of Bathgate," by Tim Rollins and K.O.S. was run without Tim Rollins's permission, and apologizes for the poor quality of the reproduction of the original art.

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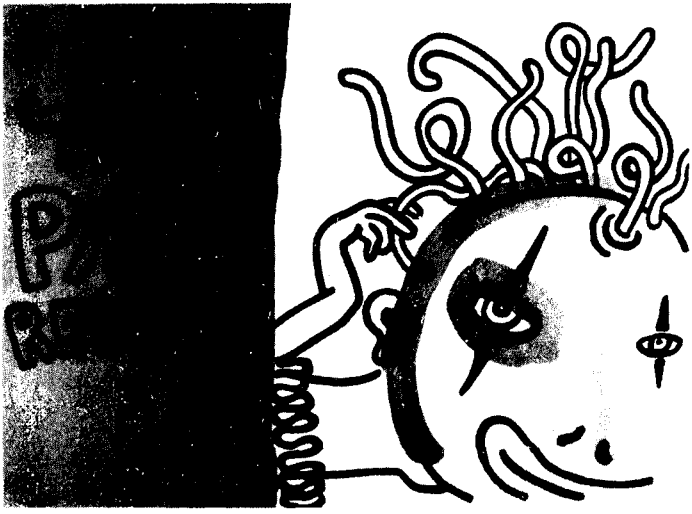

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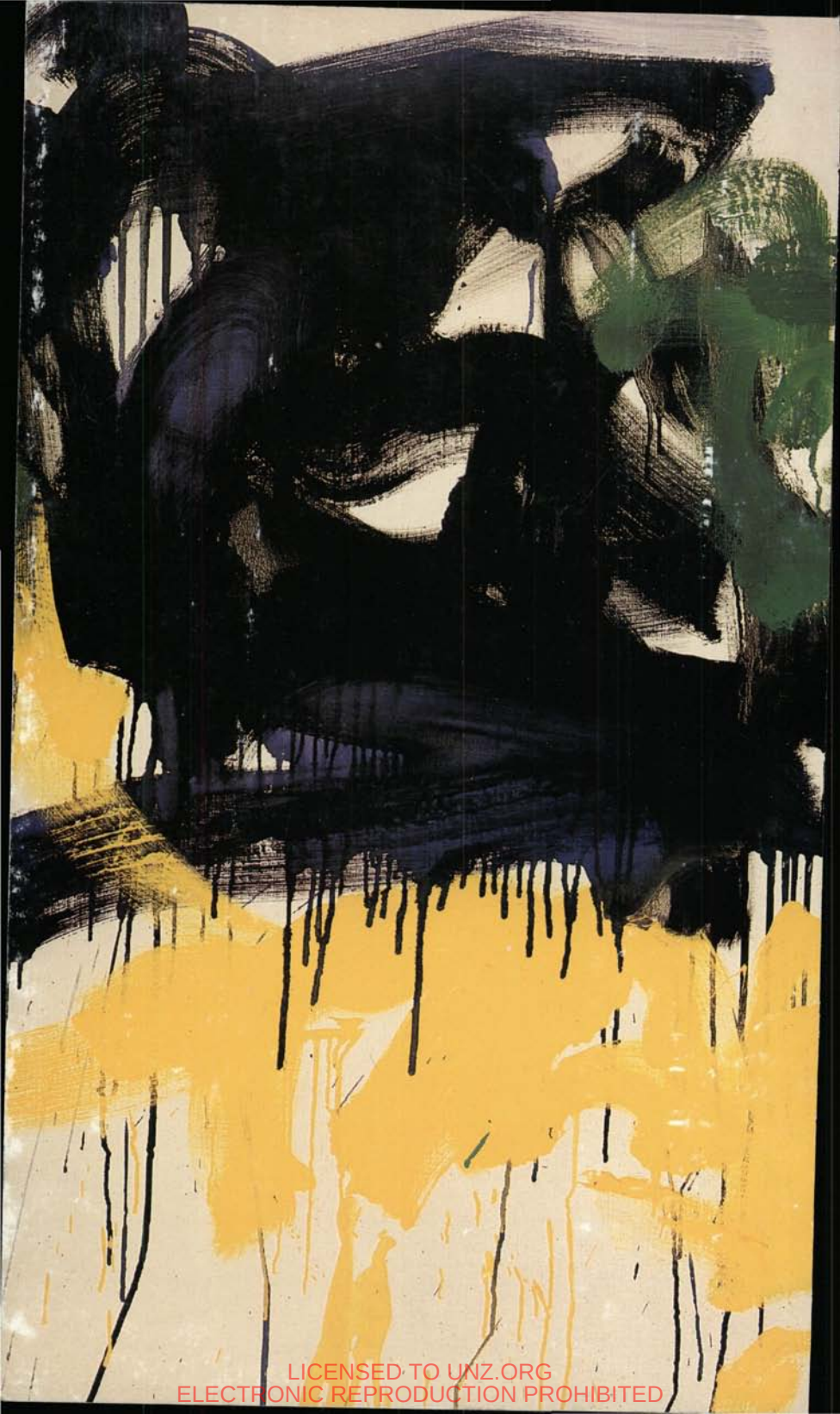
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